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**AN EXPLORATION OF KEY STAGE 3 GIRLS'
PEER GROUP FRIENDSHIPS OUTSIDE THE
CLASS-ROOM AND THEIR INFLUENCE
WITHIN THE CLASS-ROOM.**

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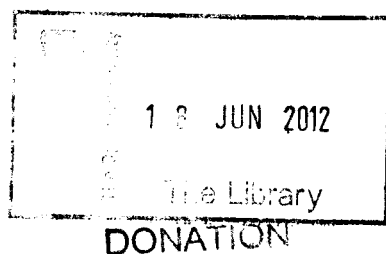
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ABSTRACT

An Exploration of Key Stage 3 Girls' Peer Group Friendships Outside the Class-room and their Influence Within the Class-room.

Whilst there is some literature in the UK and internationally surrounding both peer groups and their activities during break-times and more generally group-work within the class-room, there is no research, as yet, that focuses specifically on the influence that peer groups' activity during break-times has on pedagogy. This is an under-explored and under-theorised area which suggests that there is little understanding in education of how social relationships outside the class-room influence learning within the class-room. Moreover, much of the available literature focusing on teaching and learning seems to have been underpinned by traditional models of learning.

This research seeks to highlight the importance of friendships and its direct relationship with learning through the exploration and application of the socio-cultural theory (in particular through the work of Vygotsky and his zone of proximal development, Lave and Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice literature and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological approach). Here, learning is reconceptualised by moving the focus away from the individual in isolation and the personal, towards a focus on the social and active participation.

This qualitative research Main Study was carried out within the autumn term in a secondary school in Wales. Taking part in the research were a total of forty-four female pupils (all within Key Stage 3) and eight teachers. The pupils participated in focus groups (which were all tape-recorded) and one friendship group from each year volunteered for participant observation which took place over two full days per group. The teachers were all interviewed individually using semi-structured interviews.

The data from the field was all transcribed and analysed using the socio-cultural framework. A narrative was also written to help to provide a more holistic view of the data and to help situate the experience of friendships within the whole school day. One main over-riding theme emerged from the transcription, that of 'the secret world of friendship'. The theme revealed how much of peer group activity during break-times was opaque to many teachers and how pupils played out their powerlessness within the class-room in the face of oppression (due to the way that the education system is presently structured). Many secret notes were passed around and personal objects used as acts of resistance.

The data showed that negotiating identities (by curtailing the tension between the personal and the social) and generally managing social relationships were a key element in a school pupil's life and important in their overall identity, but this area still remains predominantly

secret to, or ignored by, many teachers. The socio-cultural approach highlights many of the tensions that are embedded within the present structure of the education system as it stands. By adopting this approach, or gaining an awareness of its key premises, the personal and the social become reunited and peer groups can become a positive and productive part of learning.

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PROLOGUE

RESEARCH JOURNEY AND AIMS

The following prologue will serve the purpose of providing the reader with the reasoning behind the thesis. It will make clear my own position and understandings and allow the reader the ability to make sense of the information by situating all that I say within these positions (both ontologically and epistemologically) and hence understand how my research aims emerged. I also hope to provide a brief overview of the whole thesis with the aim to create a more holistic understanding and thus enabling a more linear progression through the chapters. The first section will explain the motivation and inspiration behind the thesis by looking back at my professional teaching, where issues and questions regarding friendships began to emerge and form the source of my initial interest in this complicated area. I became extremely aware of the importance of friendships and became concerned as to the affect that these friendships had on the individual's self-esteem and identity. I also experienced many situations where friendships seemed to interfere with the pupil's concentration in lessons, either through arguments or communication between groups in terms of talking or signing to each other.

Personal background that provided motivation for this thesis

I started teaching physical education and art in the early 1990's in a mixed secondary school in Merseyside, where over two thirds of the pupils came from a working class environment, with the remainder from the middle class sector living around the area in which the school itself was located.

Although initially I was new to teaching, some of the issues that affected teaching and learning that I noticed in my first year continued to occur as I became more experienced. These patterns were reinforced when talking to numerous colleagues (spanning over two decades). It was also made evident that the behaviour displayed was not dependent on the type of background of the pupils or the type of school, as I have since taught in a variety of other Counties and I have taught across the spectrum for age (infants, middle, juniors and colleges). Most of my teaching was within the public sector, although one of my recent schools had previously been a private school and had around forty boarders, so was also unique.

Having had this amount of teaching experience, I still found the same issues recurring that I noticed in my first year, which I still had no real understanding of and for which the research was very sparse and non-existent in certain areas. These issues began to form the inspiration for my Doctorate. As a teacher, I quickly began to notice how some children's behaviour and learning would be inconsistent,

even within the same subject, and how friendships and peer groups were a large part of their lives, both within the class-room and also outside of the class-room (both within school during break-times and out of school at home). Often, as a form teacher as well as class teacher, I found that on numerous occasions I would have to spend time sorting out arguments between individuals or groups that had occurred during break-time and lunch-time, which would then over-spill into the next lessons' teaching and learning time. (This was in addition to any natural problems during break-time and lunch-times such as the effect of the weather, especially the wind, which seemed to have an adverse effect on concentration as well). For me it was very difficult to start the following lesson and achieve my teaching and learning objectives if problems between groups had not been resolved amicably, or at least made to lie dormant for the short-term, (a partial answer, but not long-term). Understanding the pupils' whole identity (both within formal and informal contexts) and the impact of friends on pedagogy really interested me and became the focus of my research. I believed that these more informal relationships seemed to impact directly onto the more formal aspects of the lessons.

Also of interest to me, but initially secondary in nature to the main research focus, (until my Pilot Study took place and this area emerged) was the fact that I had to deal with numerous problems erupting during the first lesson from other external influences, other than break-times (such as home influences) which were brought into

school the following day. For example, a small number of the girls in Year 7 babysat for their uncles or aunts until the very early hours of the morning and would be very tired the next day and often lacked concentration. Also, some of the children stayed at a different house over the week-end and often left kit or books at the other house, so this delayed the start of the lesson.

Similarly, another external event that began at home, but was brought into school and escalated within the school environment during a lunch-time involved a pupil from my year 11 form. In one of my school registrations, I was alerted to the fact that the night before there had been some unrest on the estate where many in the school lived. An argument had broken out between a number of gangs and one of the perpetrators was a pupil in my form. There seemed to be unfinished business as a number of boys and girls from the class swarmed round the boy as he arrived into registration and their faces looked serious as well as interested. As the morning went on, things did not seem to dissolve, along with additional rumours. The boy seemed to think there was unfinished business from the night before (and running up to this, between families and peer groups on the estate). The pupil was right and we received a phone call to warn us that a gang were on the way to the school with base-ball bats to 'get him'. We were instructed to lock the boy inside the school and ring for the police at the first sign of trouble. We were informed that the gang only wanted this particular boy and would not harm others.

I remember being locked in the school and waiting for the gang to arrive, which they promptly did, along with the police close behind. This incident changed the way I viewed 'school' and 'identity' and I began to appreciate the interconnectedness of all contexts and the importance of this, especially in relation to friendships and how they are managed in class and during break-times, and how very few teachers actually understand the importance of these friendships or how distributed they may be. It was not possible for the pupil in question to leave his feud behind or at the school gate. I began to question how he could possibly learn when all he was probably thinking about was what sort of unfinished business was going to emerge. The boy's identity seemed to be created from both the formal context (school) and the informal context (break-times, lunch-time and also out of school, at home). As ontologically identity is distributed, I would suggest that all of these systems would need to be understood to be able to provide adequate functioning in society and life. Lessons (teaching and learning) seem to form only a small part of a person's identity and these external influences (whether from break-times/lunch-times or as above from home) need to be acknowledged and understood for the learning potential of pupils to be maximised.

Looking back, this instance really brings into question the assumptions inherent in much of the literature, that contexts are separate (where school and home are seen as separate contexts, just like break-times/lunch-times, in comparison to lessons) and at

the same time illuminates interconnectedness of events and relationships emphasised in the ecological approach. The socio-cultural approach acknowledges the notion of distributed selves (discussed later, on pages 62 – 64) and the influence of the social on the personal. Unfortunately, when I started teaching the dominant model for learning was the transmission model, where teachers were the source of knowledge and the key to learning and the pupils were almost empty vessels awaiting deposits of knowledge. There was no direct emphasis on the real importance of the 'social' in learning and in-line with this, a complete avoidance of any understanding as to how friendships may affect learning within the school day.

It seems imperative here then, that teachers understand the importance of the meanings of pupils' friendships and any possible consequences of not acknowledging or accepting the potential interconnectedness of these formal and informal contexts. It would be useful to allow the pupils' voice to emerge and provide an understanding of pupils' social reality within school. It is my belief that without a thorough understanding of the importance of peer groups from the pupils' perspective (and compared to the teacher's voices) pedagogy can not be completely and holistically understood and would therefore suffer.

My research focus and aims

My ontology and epistemology (which will be described in more detail in chapter three) both allow me to situate people firmly within their contexts and pursue a socio-cultural framework. My ontology, epistemology and methodology naturally reflect an interpretive framework, which allows me the best way to investigate the effect that Key Stage Three peer group's activities during break-time have on subsequent lessons (hence learning) by exploring three research aims:

- 1) To explore continuities and discontinuities in understandings between Key Stage 3 teachers and pupils in relation to the importance and functions of peer groups during break-times and within the class-room.**
- 2) To explore pupils' negotiations of social relationships in the school environment.**
- 3) To explore the usefulness and application of socio-cultural theory in understanding Key Stage 3 friendships and pedagogy.**

By investigating the above research aims, it is my intention to acknowledge any wider implications of the research and its practical application to the teaching profession, specifically with the focus on raising awareness of the effect (if any) of peer group activities at break-times and its impact on subsequent lessons and hence, learning. Before the Main Study is discussed, (where all three research aims were explored), the Pilot study will be outlined to reveal how it informed my present thesis. The prologue will end with a complete thesis overview, before chapter one which situates friendships within the literature.

The Pilot Study

In my Pilot Study I interviewed the previous Key-Stage 3 co-ordinator and carried out focus group interviews with one group of pupils from Year 7, 8 and 9. The three years each represented one part of Key Stage Three and the age range of the pupils was between 11 and 14. I focused on research aims one and three. (See transcript in Appendix 1a).

The Pilot Study revealed that negotiating identities and managing social relationships was a key element in a school pupil's life and there was often tension between the personal and the social, as well as between the function of school (learning institution or social institution). The socio-cultural approach was helpful in trying to

explain the issues that emerged. However, the Pilot Study was small-scale and although the emerging themes formed the starting point for topics to be discussed in the one-to-one interviews and focus groups, it only involved a small number of pupils and only one teacher. Also, research aim 2 (To explore pupils' negotiations of social relationships in the school environment) was not explored and the reason for this is discussed on page 76. The Pilot Study therefore provided reassurance to me of how important peer groups are in school and inspired me to find out more about this under-researched and under-theorised area of friendships.

The Main Study

The Main Study was undertaken in one secondary school in Wales. It also provided data from friendship groups across the Key Stage Three spectrum, in the form of semi-structured interviews; either one-to-one (teachers) or focus groups (pupils). In addition to interviews, participant observation was carried out, with one friendship group of pupils from each year group being followed for two full days. All data was collected in the autumn term and before the school prepared for their forthcoming inspection. (See transcript in Appendix 2).

Thesis overview

The thesis is divided into five chapters and begins with a review of existing friendship literature. It is a critical review and, as such, identifies gaps within the present literature and challenges some of

the assumptions underpinning the dominant traditional school model of learning (namely, the transmission model, where teachers are the providers of knowledge and pupils are the receivers with no room for, and a lack of understanding of, the social elements in the classroom). The literature surrounding friendships will be explored in chapter one.

With the gap in research in relation to friendships and their impact on learning becoming evident, chapter two attempts to theorise friendship and learning using an alternative approach to bridge these gaps. The socio-cultural approach can challenge the more dominant transmission model approach, as it focuses on meaning being created in participation in contexts and within the interactions. The importance of the individual's interconnectedness of layers of their life will also be explored. The socio-cultural theory has the ability to take friendships seriously and acknowledge that they can and do impact on learning, by their very nature. The literature that will be focused on includes: communities of Practice (originating from work of Lave and Wenger), ecological approaches (concentrating on the work of Bronfenbrenner) and the zone of proximal development (from the work of Vygotsky).

Chapter three focuses more on an epistemological stance and discusses the methodology used in the research and the rationale behind this in relation to my interpretive framework. The choices made for data collection reflect this (participant observation, one-to-

one semi-structured interviews and focus groups) and are described along with what I actually did.

In chapter four, the process of analysis begins. To provide the reader with a more holistic view of the research, the chapter begins with a narrative. This is a story of my journey of the research that I undertook. I feel that my research aims naturally allow me to select information from the whole research to support them, but as such I am aware that I could hold a powerful position within this selection, in terms of what is and what is not selected. I therefore feel that the reader should be given a fuller picture of events and for this reason I have included a narrative which provides this information. The research aims can therefore be situated within the whole experience of the research and the reader should be able to form a more linear understanding of where friendships fit into the whole school day.

The three research aims for this thesis are employed as a tool to analyse the one overriding theme that emerged from the data; namely, secret worlds. The theoretical perspectives from chapter two contribute to the interpretation of the themes.

The final chapter reviews the thesis and reflects on the aims and the process. It considers how the thesis has contributed to the literature and suggests possible ideas for future research that have emerged as issues whilst conducting this qualitative piece of research and also makes professional recommendations.

CHAPTER ONE

LOCATING THE STUDY WITHIN THE LITERATURE - THE LANDSCAPE OF FRIENDSHIPS

The aim of this chapter is to summarise some of the research that surrounds friendships (although word limit has meant that I have had to be selective) and to understand why the area of friendships in relation to learning seems to have been over-looked. There appears to be a gap in research for this particular issue. The function of friendships will therefore be discussed, and recent technological advances that have impacted on friendships will be acknowledged. The following section will then consider the place of 'friendship' within the education system. This will be done by firstly discussing the current philosophical understandings of pedagogy (including the current design of schools) and problematising the notion that both teachers and learners seem to be constrained by the demands of the present system. These constraints impact on how teachers view the importance of friendships and their place within the class-room.

Following on from the discussion of pedagogy, with it's acknowledgement of the curriculum being comprised of both a formal and an informal aspect, I will focus specifically on the hidden curriculum (informal curriculum), as that, again, is an under-researched area (unlike the formal curriculum) and one where

friendships are usually located. I will then end the chapter with a consideration of how emotions and more generally cognitive capacity may be affected by interactions within peer groups and hence indirectly impact on learning.

The following review of literature is therefore framed in a critical manner in an attempt to find out why so little research has been undertaken in such an important area. Attempts are made to discuss the research and its possible ramifications for understanding friendships and learning, based on the current underpinning assumptions and dominant discourses surrounding this area.

The Function and Importance of Peer Groups.

Most of what has been researched previously, focuses on play in the primary age-group and all research views play and thus break-time as completely separate to what happens in the class-room. In contrast to these views, the following study will review any relevant work and then attempt to offer and apply alternative explanations to the present study in the terms of socio-cultural theory. I will therefore be using socio-cultural theory because it takes account of the inter-relatedness of context and relationship. The socio-cultural literature will be examined in relation to the school environment, which suggests (contrary to the traditional models of learning) that all learning is distributed over the multiple contexts of children's and teachers' lives. This immediately foregrounds the argument that to

ignore break-times and any wider relationships may lead to a corresponding inability to account for and understand the real context of learning: moreover, this impacts directly on this study, with the suggestion that break-time behaviour influences subsequent lessons. I have also argued for the importance of the pupil perspective and for context and experience of context. The following review, therefore, reveals the difficulty of investigating friendships and learning because of the gap in literature and hence the under-theorising.

Pellegrini and Blatchford (2003) focus on break-time in school as a main school context for friendships and state that previous research has focused on friendship generally and remained context non-specific. This is problematic for my research, as little literature is available within schools and even Blatchford's and Pellegrini's almost monopoly (and almost ownership and authority) of school friendship research does not consider implications for lessons or a more distributed self.

They reinforce the fact that little is known about how the social organisation of schools and class-room dynamics affect friendships generally. This could be because they are so complicated to research and understand or it may be that the researchers ontological and epistemological positions do not include the possibility of distributed selves and literature on communities of practice. It may also be that the research on distributed self and learner is fairly new: Pellegrini and Blatchford (2003) summarise a

simple list of criteria that pupils have provided that explain reasons for school based friendship, namely; contact from previous school, age, length of time that they have known each other, shared interests, and personal characteristics (such as: shared sense of humour, being helpful, ability to work together and not being bossy).

Similarly, Hartup (1992) lists qualities of friendships between children that are symmetrical and horizontally organised (as opposed to adult-child which are characterised by asymmetry and vertical arrangement):

‘They involve reciprocity (equality) and commitment; are affiliative rather than attachment (as with parents); involve common interests; and are egalitarian’ (1992, p.33).

It seems unlikely that friendship can be described by just a list of ‘traits’ and as Pellegrini and Blatchford (2003) point out, Hartup (1992) does not explain the importance of the friendships, only the difference between children and adults’ (or non-friends) interactions. This study will attempt to unravel the complexities and implications of the importance of friendships with specific focus on break-time activity and how this friendship can impact on class-room activities and commensurate with this, learning.

The most relevant research on break-time (or 'recess') seems to be that reported by Blatchford (1998, 2002, 2003, 2004), when he considers the issue of the state of play in schools. There is an acceptance that this is a 'neglected' area and he also recognises both negative and positive views of break-times with a focus on pupils' perspectives. (These issues come from a national survey of break-time carried out by the University of London, Institute of Education). Most importantly, break-times are identified as being 'most opaque to adults' (1998, p. 58) and that the pupils are the experts in their groups and often are the only 'witnesses' of what occurs during break-times. It is therefore crucial to understand the importance of friendship from the pupils' perspective and compare this to the teachers' perspective to see if they are similar or there are any disparities between them (research aim 1). If the teachers' views on the importance and function of friendships are incongruent with those of the pupils, then, this may have consequences for the teacher-pupil relationship in subsequent lessons and ultimately for learning.

As Blatchford (1998b) states in line with Hartup (1992), peer relation experiences and 'performances' occurring at break-times are still misunderstood by staff who know very little about this specific culture. It is therefore important to research further into the importance and function of peer groups in the current chronological time and not assume that the limited research findings from previous studies can be successfully and appropriately applied to new studies,

especially when the socio-cultural theory is not the underpinning framework.

Some of Blatchford's research also acknowledges the 'lower-level but more common problems that can arise at break-times and can spill over into the school' (1998a, p. 59). Although not stated in the research, this and other similar statements seem to imply that break-times are separate from 'school' or the class-room (representing learning), which may be partly the reason why problems exist in the first place. This is where an understanding of socio-cultural theory may be able to help alleviate any potential instances of disruption or at least offer explanations of why they occur and promote awareness within education. This 'over-spill' referred to by Blatchford (1998) again has not been focused on within research, and this will form part of research aim 2 by looking at the way pupils manage and negotiate relationships both within and between contexts.

Even though my original inspiration for this thesis occurred over twenty years ago, there are still gaps in the literature regarding friendships and learning. However, I must acknowledge that, although these gaps are still present, certain technological advances have occurred and have moved with the times. These will now be briefly discussed as they can impact on friendships and alter the types of interaction between peer groups both within and out-side of school.

Technological change and its influence on friendships

The research to date does not discuss the impact of developing technologies on friendships and how these impacts play out during break-times, in the class-room, or at home. According to Boyle (2007), society has moved away from media such as newspapers, radio and television (referred to as 'analogue environment') towards a 'digital environment' where previously separate media such as computers, telephones and television have now become connected and 'portable'. Using a National sample of 12-15 year olds in Britain, (although the way the study was conducted is not included), Ofcom (2006) revealed that 87% of girls in this category now own a mobile phone and 63% of girls use the internet regularly. With the introduction of this new technology, it may be that friendships seem to be made more vulnerable to these outside influences. Again, the gap in the literature available about the impact of technology on friendships and specifically those peer groups in school and during break-time, has meant that this specific area of interest has remained predominantly opaque (secret) to most teachers. As Smith et al. (2008) recognises in research using focus groups with Year 7 and 8, 'even if messages are sent and/or received out of school, often the problems will come back to the school the next day' (2008, p. 382). The invasion of personal space has consequences for the self generally, especially for self-esteem and the distributed self. Things that have happened at home can be brought into school and this may provide an instant barrier for learning.

If the teacher is unaware of such impacts, this may have ramifications for the quality of relationship that is attainable within lessons. The pupil or pupils involved may be more concerned with sorting out any unresolved problems amongst peers than concentrating on class-room work. Again this is an argument for examining socio-cultural theory, as it seems impossible to disconnect what has gone on previously in the school day from the present context.

Although Smith et al. (2008) does not mention the socio-cultural theory directly, he does look at the origin of cyber-bullying and questions the effect of the interplay between school and home. Two thirds of the sample stated that the origins were in school and then continued at home and the author interpreted cyber-bullying as: 'A reaction to an incident that happened on the school grounds, and is then carried over into online exchanges using the home computer' (2008, p. 391), or the incident again occurs at school, but it is the victim who retaliates using technology. This also means that one third of this cyber-bullying must originate from home or out-side school (but this is not mentioned), which again highlights the importance of an ecological model which emphasises the interconnectedness of a person's life. Many students seem reluctant to report cyber-bullying to school and prefer to report it to their peers first, followed by parents/guardians, and school last. This again seems to reiterate just how important friendships are to pupils and

suggests that some pupils may keep this cyber-bullying secret from teachers. However, at the other extreme, Cassidy et al. (2009) also suggested that, apart from bullying of marginalised groups, much of the cyber-bullying occurred within friendship groups, and the way that discourse was interpreted online often had its part in providing a downwards spiral of negative dialogue between the bully and victim. Again, if this cyber-bullying within or between groups remains secret to teachers, the teacher will probably be unable to engage the pupils fully, as they may be worried about the bullying. Although this research focuses on bullying, not on the process and interplay of friendship per se, it echoes the friendship sections above and does seem to highlight how this cyber-bullying, if remaining secret from teachers, could impact on the individual's daily life, which includes learning.

Section summary

Some of the functions of friendships were discussed above and it can be seen just how important peers are to an individual. Similarly, technological advances have meant that friendship patterns of interaction have changed with the dependence on mobile phones and internet messaging sites. What used to be private space has now become more social. Also noticeable was the lack of research in secondary schools in Britain and the general gap on the influence of peer groups on pedagogy.

The review of the literature that follows will aim to situate friendships within the wider framework of pedagogy and I will start by defining the term 'pedagogy' as it forms part of my title. Leading on from this definition will be a short problematisation of the present models of teaching and learning for teachers and the historical reasoning behind this, in an attempt to situate the current teaching climate both ontologically and epistemologically. The main focus will be on locating where friendships fit into this present structure and will allow for an exploration of the informal/hidden curriculum. Finally, the notion of emotions and cognitive capacity will be explored to reveal how issues related to friendships have the potential to impact on learning. Holistically, this information will provide a rationale for focusing on the socio-cultural theory (discussed in the next Chapter and forming research aim 3) as an alternative way of understanding pedagogy and, in particular, the impact of friendships on learning.

Situating friendships within the present framework of pedagogy.

The definition of 'pedagogy'

There is very little research in secondary education relating to pedagogy directly as a term (although research by Alexander and Pollard (2004) seem to lead the way in primary education). However, one researcher who did focus on secondary education was Mortimore (1999) who researched pedagogy and its impact on learning. However, the definition of pedagogy remains a contested

term, with no one accepted definition, partly because of its translation between cultures. Amongst definitions include, 'a science of teaching', but even this leaves questions as to the audiences and interpretation of 'science' and 'teaching'. It is also important not to neglect the learner in this definition, so Mortimore later defines 'pedagogy' as: 'Any conscious activity by one person designed to enhance learning in another' (1999, p. 3). However, this definition along with the first omits any acknowledgement of the socio-cultural aspect of teaching and learning.

Personally, I see pedagogy as a variety of interactional factors, including; what is taught, what is learned, the lay-out of the class-room, the interactions within that context etc. So, although it is a science of teaching in terms of learning and using skills, to me it is much more than this. Both the teacher and the learner are connected to their environment, where learning is embedded and a result of interactions within the context, in this case, the class-room. However, I also believe that the teacher needs to be aware of what goes on at break-time between peer groups (a separate context), as well as during the lesson, to be able to plan holistically for any lesson. The next section will consider and problematise the current designs of many schools to help situate teachers in amongst pedagogical decisions. Teachers are one small part of a network of decisions and often are constrained by the very system that should motivate and encourage them. With the many problems of the present system being identified along with its related underlying dominant

discourses, I suggest a consideration of an alternative discourse, that of socio-cultural theory. (This will be examined in detail in Chapter Two). This theory can be used to explore how the social side of the person (peer groups) can impact on the personal identity of the individual and ultimately may affect learning.

The design of schools and effective teaching – Where does friendship fit in?

Mortimore (1999) suggests that schools have been designed for the industrial age and have remained fairly stable over the passage of time (over one hundred years) with only superficial changes. He sums up the school by suggesting that:

‘The school day remains fairly inflexible; the process of teaching and learning is largely determined by the timetable and the structure of subject domains; children progress in age cohorts, often divided by ability; and summative learning outcomes are assessed by national examinations...for these reasons, the secondary years are arguably the most constrained of all phases of education’ (1999, p. 68).

With such constraints seemingly acknowledged and in operation, school itself further limits the amount of control an individual teacher has over the pedagogy, and even policy within the school is

governed by external bodies (National Curriculum, finance, assessment procedures etc.). At a school level the policy can be developed but, again, this is usually through a hierarchy of control above the average class teacher. If this was not enough, both the teachers and the school are frequently subjected to visits from Ofsted.

Mortimore (1999) states that:

‘Because we do not fully understand the relationships between the learning of the individual and the activities of the teacher, controversy about pedagogy is inevitable’ (p. 71).

This controversy over the definition of pedagogy and the misunderstandings attached to the relationship between the teacher and learner seems to problematise the notion of what constitutes ‘effective teaching’. There seems to be so many variables that ought to be taken into account before any serious definition of ‘effective teaching’ can be acknowledged and respected. Similarly, Mortimore (1999) researched pedagogy in the secondary school and suggested a number of points that reflected effective pedagogy, which can be shown in the table below.

A pedagogy for secondary education may include:
<i>Consideration</i> of the aims of education and the values which underpin teaching
<i>Knowledge</i> of theories of learning
<i>Knowledge</i> of different conceptions of teaching

<p><i>Knowledge</i> of models of teaching and learning and of the dynamic interaction between student characteristics, the characteristics of the learning environment, task demands, the processes of learning and teaching and different kinds of learning.</p> <p><i>Understanding</i> of how these can be operationalized in the class-room</p> <p><i>Knowledge and skills</i> for evaluating practice, research and theory relating to education</p>

Table 1.1: A Pedagogy for Secondary Education (Mortimore et al.1999, p. 70).

The table above is really determined by the National Curriculum, although at first sight it appears diverse and holistic. Mortimore recognises this and problematises the fact that there are no overall aims prescribed by the National Curriculum and generic skills (including working with others, communication and metacognition) have little reference. Moreover, there is 'no reference to the values in which the curriculum is embedded, and the ways it should be taught to promote these values' (1999, p.71). There was, then, an acknowledgement of the isolated and disconnected approach to learning. The National Curriculum seems to have omitted any chance for meaning-making. Similarly there is no direct reference to friendships and their impact on teaching and learning in the table and no recognition of the connection between the formal and informal curriculum and, as a consequence, concentrates on the formal curriculum. The following section therefore considers the influence of the 'hidden curriculum' (informal curriculum) where friendships are usually located.

THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

Smith et al. (2004) describe the hidden curriculum as a set of guidelines or rules that often are not taught but are assumed to be known and, as such, contain items that 'impact social interactions, school performance, and sometimes safety' (2004, p.5). Amongst the list are other elements such as body language, slang, idioms etc. and are often aspects that are just acquired through every day functioning and observation. Smith et al suggest:

'That often it is only when the rules are broken that these elements become obvious...it forms the unwritten culture of schools' (2004, p. 11).

In relation to peer groups, the impact on relationships is a key issue along with which aspects it dictates, such as; how to dress, where to hang out during classes, acceptable games to play. Pupils are required to know this hidden curriculum to be able to make informed and consistent decisions and for some this is not that easy to acquire. Jackson (1990) suggests that more than intelligence or ability is required to be able to understand the hidden curriculum and acknowledges 'personality' as a possible reason for this discrepancy (in terms of attitudes, values and beliefs brought to each context). As Jackson also states in acknowledgement of the complexities of the hidden curriculum:

'Personal qualities that are beneficial in one setting may be detrimental in another. Indeed, even a single setting may make demands, call upon competing or conflicting tendencies in a person's make-up' (1990, p. 36).

The hidden curriculum is therefore an important part of friendships and again very little research has been done on how pupils and even teachers manage this informal alongside the formal or its impact on student's identity.

Kentli (2009) devised a table (shown below) displaying comparisons between hidden curriculum theories and argues that the hidden curriculum is essential for 'the development of critical pedagogy and the table includes 'values, intergroup relations and celebrations that enables students' socialization process' (p. 83).

Author	Book	Definition
Emile Durkheim([1925] 1961, p148)	Moral Education	Durkheim observed that more is taught and learned in schools than specified in the established curriculum of textbooks and teacher manuals. Even though it is not directly mentioned as 'hidden curriculum', this refers to the hidden curriculum
Philip Jackson (1968)	Life in Class-rooms	Learning to wait quietly, exercising restraint, trying, completing work, keeping busy, cooperating, showing allegiance to both teachers and peers, being neat and

		punctual, and conducting oneself courteously.
Robert Dreeben (1967)	What is Learned in Class-room?	The hidden curriculum makes the pupils to form transient social relationships, submerge much of their personal identity, and accept the legitimacy of categorical treatment.
Elizabeth Vallance (1973)	"Hiding the Hidden Curriculum: An interpretation of the language of justification in nineteenth-century educational reform" (Article)	The "unstudied curriculum", the "covert" or "latent" curriculum, the "non-academic outcomes of schooling", the "by-products of schooling", the "residue of schooling", or simply "what schooling does to people".
Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976)	Schooling in Capitalist America	Schools are not seen as an agency of social mobility but as reproducing the existing class structure, sending a silent, but powerful message to students with regard to their intellectual ability, personal traits and the appropriate occupational choice and this takes place through the hidden curriculum.
Jane Martin (1976)	"What should we do with a hidden curriculum when we find one?" (Article)	Hidden curriculum can be found in the social structure of the class-room, the teacher's exercise of authority, the rules governing the relationship between teacher and student. Standard learning activities can be found also to be sources, as can the teacher's use of language, textbooks, tracking systems, and curriculum priorities,
Paul Willis (1977)	Learning to Labour	The hidden curriculum of the school structure which is most important in determining the reproduction of class relations in schools, rather, it is the hidden curriculum of pupil resistances (cultural production) which must be

		understood if the dynamics of social and cultural reproductionism is to be explained.
Jean Anyon (1980)	"Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work" (Article)	The hidden curriculum of schoolwork is tacit preparation for relating to the process of production in a particular way. Differing curricular, pedagogical, and pupil evaluation practices emphasize different cognitive and behavioural skills in each social setting and thus contribute to the development in the children of certain potential relationships to physical and symbolic capital, to authority, and to the process of work.
Michael Apple (1982)	Education and Power	He emphasized that hidden curriculum involves various interests, cultural forms, struggles, agreements, and compromises.
Henry Giroux (1983)	Theories of Reproduction and Resistance in the New Sociology of Education: A critical analysis.	He defines hidden curriculum as those unstated norms, values and beliefs embedded in and transmitted to students through the underlying rules that structure the routines and social relationships in school and class-room.

Table 1.2: Definitions of the Hidden Curriculum (Kentll, 2009, pp84 – 86)

The table above highlights just how important it is to consider the hidden curriculum when exploring pedagogy. Much of the activity within the school day relates to the hidden curriculum and friendship and the social seems to be embedded within this part of the curriculum.

Gatto (2005) wrote in detail about the hidden curriculum and reflected back on his years of teaching, which included him gaining a teacher award. He came to the conclusion that through his teaching he had innocently passed on seven important lessons to the students. The first lesson was that of 'confusion' in that everything taught was out of context and disconnected. Secondly, there was the notion of 'class position' which was reinforced by not allowing pupils to change classes. The third lesson was one of displaying 'indifference' where he accepted the idea that students were expected to just 'turn on and off like a light switch' (2005, p. 3) and the bell was also partly blamed for abrupt finishes. Fourthly, pupils became 'emotionally dependent' on teachers by suggesting that rights did not exist within the school unless authorised by the school authorities. Closely linked to this fourth lesson was 'intellectual dependency' where pupils were expected to wait for teachers to tell them what to do and 'make the meanings of our lives'. The penultimate lesson that he taught was that of providing provisional self-esteem, where pupils' self-respect was supposed to depend on expert opinion and being judged by those in authority, through reports, exams etc. Finally, lesson seven was that 'one can not hide' here. Gatto believed that there were no private spaces or time for children. I believe that the pupils have to try to find these spaces, with the most obvious of these being 'break-time' and then also, when they can within the class-room, by their communicating between and within friendship groups. We have already seen from

the earlier section just how important friendships and the social are to pupil's overall self-esteem and identity.

Apart from the notion of the hidden curriculum and its connected potential to impact on learning, another under-researched area in relation to friendships is that of the affective element of learning. This includes how emotions have the potential to affect concentration within lessons, and also includes such emotions as happiness, sadness and boredom. Again the research is sparse and does not focus on peer groups, but can be applied usefully to this thesis. Similarly, and related to emotions, the notion of cognitive capacity will also be discussed below.

The potential affect that emotions in friendships may have on learning

Meyer and Turner (2002) state that:

‘Emotions are intertwined in teachers’ instructional responses and students’ beliefs and actions, constituting an integral part of the interpersonal processes that create class-room contexts’ (p. 107).

I would argue that emotions are also intertwined in pupil's actions during the break-time context, although Meyer and Turner (2002)

specifically studied student-teacher interactions and the affective processes involved during instructional interactions between pupil-teacher. Some of the emotions studied included enjoyment and boredom in lessons, and they believed that the optimal learning experiences consisted of a complicated balance between individual and contextual factors, and that involvement in the learning process was socially constructed. Meyer and Turner (2002) carried out qualitative research similar to mine (class-room observations and interviews) and were concerned about the lack of research into the affective side of teaching and interactions. Amongst other things, through student interviews they found that the pupils' emotions especially enjoyment and boredom altered with their involvement levels and similarly when pupils were able to self-regulate within activities, then they were more autonomous and able to adjust the challenges upwards and even change their negative feelings from boredom to enjoyment. This interest in emotions again reinforces the socio-cultural emphasis (research aim 3) especially the notion that the individuals' identity is a mixture of both personal and social factors which are seemingly intertwined and can affect learning. One other personal factor that is linked to the control of emotions is cognitive ability or capacity and this too has the potential to be influenced by the activities of peer groups, as is discussed below.

Cognitive capacity and learning

Schmeichel et al. (2008) found that cognitive ability helped in the control of emotions, and that emotions could be hidden by those with higher cognitive capacity, often to their benefit, and that there were individual differences in relation to regulation of emotions linked to cognitive ability. This is an important issue for teachers to be aware of, and may help to explain why some pupils behave the way they do, and others rarely get into trouble: this research opens up possible questions about how teachers can be really sure that they have individuals fully engaged. Children would be adept at hiding their 'self' from the teacher (as the teacher is not part of their friendship group). The teacher maybe unaware that a pupil is worried about certain friendship issues or other problems, which could, in fact, have the potential to hinder their capacity to learn.

Although this study was conducted in the military (and of no direct relevance to school), both could be classed as institutions and are traditionally based on discipline so share some common ground, which seems to highlight the notion that there is a link between emotion and cognitive capacity. The study showed also how mindfulness, (a mental mode much like the ability to give full attention to the present task without being effected by emotion etc.) could be learned through training. The main relevance of the research is in its possible application to schools, in relation to teaching and creating the most productive environment to learn in.

Similarly, a military study by Jha et al. (2010) suggested that in certain times of high stress cognitive capacity could be taken up with emotional problems. The findings of the study, if applied to schools, may pose questions about the influence of problematic friendships on cognitive capacity in relation to emotions and stress. There may be issues such as fall-outs within and between groups, bringing unresolved issues from break-times into the lessons, fall-outs during the lesson (maybe during a task). Given the research findings based around cognitive capacity and emotion, it may be that any emotional disturbance outside or within the class-room may have the potential to influence the pupils' engagement with learning, where the affective may interrupt their potential to learn.

As Meyer and Turner (2002) suggest, 'optimal learning experiences required a complex balance between contextual and individual factors' (p. 109) as learning is never the result of one factor. What happens at break-times (or any space in or between lessons) then needs to be understood by the teachers, and the importance and function of peer groups fully understood to provide a more holistic and practical view of learning, to maximise the potential to learn without peer group distractions.

Section summary

The research above (although limited) seems to indicate that activities of peer groups during break-time (and also within the class-

room) may have the ability to dictate the types of emotions expressed and, therefore, may indirectly influence the amount and quality of learning that occurs. The main relevance to my study revolves around their acknowledgement of the need to consider the interrelatedness of the person and the context, which involves emotion or affective domain (along with cognition and motivation).

Chapter summary

This chapter has attempted to examine general literature on friendships and specifically in relation to their place within the secondary school curriculum, i.e. the informal curriculum/ hidden curriculum. It was evident that much of the limited research on pedagogy was still underpinned by traditional views of schooling. Also, pedagogy, whilst accepting the construction of knowledge, seems not to focus on the role of the social and cultural contexts in construction. Pedagogy in general was discussed, and the present structure of schools was problematised. There was no appropriate research that explored how certain activities of peer groups within the class-room, (often secret activities that were not set up by the teacher as part of their teaching), may also have affected learning. There has also been a corresponding gap in the research on how emotions (such as happiness, sadness, boredom) between and within groups could potentially affect learning within school, and this too was discussed.

Moreover, there has been no direct application of socio-cultural theory to an understanding of peer groups during break-times, and no suggestion of any implications of this theory for subsequent lessons and schooling as a whole. The socio-cultural approach offers an alternative way of understanding friendships during break-times and within the class-room, and focuses on negotiating and managing identities and relationships. Participation and social interaction within and between contexts is vital and there has to be recognition of the interconnectedness of these contexts. The notion that the context and the practices which construct the context 'shift' is common to all research, and that suggests that a theoretical position which can accept and account for this is required here to understand friendships and learning. I present such a framework in the next chapter, where I will critically discuss the socio-cultural theory as a means of offering an alternative theory for exploring and understanding the relationship of friendships to learning, and the impact of break-time activities on pedagogy, to explore the three research aims.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORISING FRIENDSHIPS AND LEARNING

The aim of this chapter is to examine socio-cultural theory, and posit it as an alternative to the traditional learning theories that are seen to under-pin much of the previous research on peer group behaviour during break-times and within the school more generally. Setting a foundation for socio-cultural theory was the later work of Vygotsky (1978, 2007), who focused on the active individual and, as well as focusing on the 'social' within the individual, he argues that the 'within' (intra-psychological) emerges from the between (inter-psychological). The importance of the social environment was highlighted, along with the notion that the child does not develop in isolation and needs interaction with their social environment for learning to take place. Moreover, he argues that all development and, so, learning was essentially social in its construction and process. Vygotsky's focus was on interaction within the class-room, and placed responsibility on the teacher to adapt their class-room climate to encourage active learning by providing appropriately-pitched guidance, (scaffolding) through their expert knowledge of their subject: It is this relationship in learning that is important. The second section will discuss the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979), who allows some of the problems related to Vygotsky's work to be answered by looking at an ecological model that accounts for different systems (micro, meso, macro) operating within an

individual's life. It introduces the notion of interconnectedness and explains how each system can impact on the individual, even though they are situated within only one of them.

The final section will consider the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) which explores the notion of Communities of Practice (CoP) and Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP), where learning has been reconceptualised as experience and not focusing on the transmission model, where learning is the acquisition of knowledge and skills predominantly dictated by the teacher. Each individual belongs to a number of CoP's and may have different levels of participation within these communities. Learning is now understood as participation in these communities or social spaces. Hopefully with these three theoretical ideas explored (Vygotsky, Bronfenbrenner, Lave and Wenger), a deeper understanding of the impact of friendships on learning may be provided.

Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory of learning.

My rationale for discussing Vygotsky's work first is because I wanted to start with the individual and their immediate context within which they are confined. I then want to introduce alternatives to this approach that focus on the influence of wider networks and reflect the importance of participating within a wider community of practice. This social account of learning in Vygotsky's work can be explained using the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

The zone of proximal development

Vygotsky (1978) stated that the zone of proximal development is formed because the developmental process lags behind the learning process. It reflects performance and competence when collaborating with a more able other, and actual performance reflects what a pupil can do alone. The zone of proximal development is the difference between what an individual can achieve alone (actual ability) and what they can achieve with the support of a more experienced and supportive other (potential ability): eventually the pupil will be able to achieve this level of ability on their own without help as they have internalised what was needed.

Vygotsky (1978) stated that:

‘The maturation of the child’s higher mental functions occurs in this co-operative process, that is, it occurs through the adult’s assistance and participation’
(Daniels, 2001, p. 55)

These then become internalised and become part of the pupil’s individual achievement. With this insight, it seems that the internal processes and the social relations of the pupil and the teacher are critical if effective learning is to occur.

The zone of proximal development was originally a metaphor that was invented to explain 'the way in which social and participatory learning takes place' (Daniels, 2007, p. 56), and provides a tool to help deconstruct the individual's learning process. Their engagement with the environment allows the individual to both shape the cultural meanings of the outside and, at the same time, allow them to be shaped by these. Relationships must be able to create the zone of proximal development:

'That is learning awakens a variety of internal processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers' (Daniels, 2007, p. 90).

These processes become internalised and then belong to the development of the child. To help this process develop, the more able partner can use 'scaffolding' as a tool. To understand scaffolding as a process, it is worth imagining a young child trying to complete a simple jigsaw for the first time. The adult can use verbal instructions or simple prompts or clues as well as non-verbal communication (pointing, eye-contact etc.) to assist the child. The next time the jigsaw is done again, the adult may withdraw some of the help or give less instruction to allow the child to become more independent. Eventually the child should be able to complete the jigsaw on their own: they have built up an enabling relationship and achieved the zone of proximal development.

A criticism of the theory is that external influences, (such as the effect of negative peer group relationships in scaffolding exercises and the effect of other contexts such as break-time), are not clearly explained. One might argue that for a zone of proximal development to emerge, it is not only the quality of relationship between teacher and pupil (or more able peer) that is important, but also the context of that relationship: therefore, any emotional issues would inevitably interfere with that relationship, such as group arguments or the possibility of the teacher putting together two pupils who do not get on. Surely here the relationship will become one of disabling, as opposed to enabling, for the possibility of the emergence of the zone of proximal development. Teachers may be unaware of friendship issues and some pupils may be able to hide such issues from teachers whilst others may not, which was explored in Chapter One in relation to cognitive capacity. The pupil is faced with many situations which call for negotiations of identities. As was previously discussed in Chapter One, friendships are a major part of many pupils' identity.

Identity and the zone of proximal development

Identity (which is essentially contextual) can, therefore, influence the zone of proximal development. Wenger (1991) suggests one problem with the traditional class-room is that:

'It is both too disconnected from the world and too uniform to support meaningful forms of identification, where negotiation of identities is a struggle and pleasing the teacher and getting good grades prevail' (p.269).

Wenger's observation supports the notion that pupils do, in fact, have to negotiate identities and may find this hard to deal with. Research aim 2 will set out to investigate how pupils manage their negotiations when faced with conflicts at school as, again, there also seems to be a gap in the literature for this particular area.

As Wenger (1991) states:

'It is no surprise, then, that the playground tends to become the centrepiece of school life (and of school learning), that the class-room itself becomes a dual world where instruction must compete with message passing, and that some students either seek their identity in subversive behaviour or simply refuse to participate' (p.269).

The idea that school allows a choice between 'meaningful identity' and 'learning' (or break-time and class-room) seems to create a problem in relation to identity. This situation may not arise if teachers become aware of the importance and functions of peer groups during

break-time, and both pupils and teachers alike are aware of this more holistic approach where identities are negotiated. Therefore, as development is seen as relational, and relationship is key to this theory, it must be recognised that, as relationships occur in context, some of the class-room context has to be influenced by other external contexts (i.e. break-time context), but as yet no research has focused on this aspect of friendships. This is one of the main arguments for reviewing socio-cultural theory, as relationships underpin learning, and as relationships are ongoing occurrences in the context of life, to exclude break-time from an understanding of learning would be to neglect a key aspect of the school day. Hence, the above argument provides a strong case for examining the work pioneered by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and ecology, along with Lave and Wenger (1991) on Communities of Practice, situated learning (including legitimate peripheral participation) and the notion of distributed selves and negotiated identities.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model

Similarly, Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1979) suggests that development occurs through the interactions and connections between people and the events in their environment, but on different levels; micro, meso, exo and macro. Bronfenbrenner (1979) believed in observing children's behaviour in natural settings whilst interacting with adults. An analogy linked to the design of Russian dolls is used to explain how the 'ecological environment' is conceived in his

theory. This analogy seems relevant to this study if the different layers of the doll are compared to the different contexts that both the pupils and teachers find themselves in. The inner doll can be linked to the immediate setting containing the individual, such as the class-room (the microsystem). The next stage involves looking for the interconnections between the settings in which the individual actually participates (mesosystem). The mesosystem could represent direct links between break-time and class-room. The third level seems to imply perceived effects, where the individuals' development can be affected by events in settings that they are not physically present in (exosystems). This is where cyber-space and mobile phones/messaging sites could operate. The macrosystem could refer to the curriculum and the school education system with the:

‘Consistency observed within a given culture or subculture in the form and content of its constituent micro-, meso-, and exosystems, as well as any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies’ (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 258).

The concepts of the four systems described above provide a more holistic view of learning and, again, would provide a way of understanding pupils' peer group behaviour during break-times and within lessons by applying socio-cultural theory. The importance of this ecological model for children's development lies with the notion that the centre of attention is not just on the individual, it is on the

'interpersonal systems in which he participates both within and across settings' (1979, p. 97). These different levels reveal the messiness of life and reveal many external factors that can and do impact on learning. One of these factors is friendship groups and the negotiation of identity within and between contexts.

Section summary

So far Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner have been discussed and their contributions to socio-cultural theory highlighted. Vygotsky focused on social interaction between a more able adult or more able peer in relation to enabling a zone of proximal development and hence development or learning. Vygotsky helped to explain one way learning could take place through interaction (and the added use of scaffolding) leading to internalisation and development, but did not focus on external influences, such as peer groups. Bronfenbrenner, however, looked at the interconnectedness of an individual's life and recognised how different systems (microsystem, mesosystem and macrosystem) impact on the identity of the individual and, ultimately, on learning. The final section will discuss the contribution of Lave and Wenger with their focus on Communities of Practice and the importance of participation. Here, learning becomes situated and distributed among its members. With Communities of Practice there is an acknowledgement that identities can and do shift and negotiations are a large part of this.

Defining Communities of Practice.

For the purposes of clarification, Gatto (2005) distinguishes between a 'network' and a 'community' and situates schools amongst networks:

'Networks like schools are not communities (2005, p. 51)...in fact the term 'community' hardly applies to the way we interact with each other. We live in networks, not communities' (2005, p. 21).

Gatto's (2005) definition of 'community' is a positive one and revolves around social interaction and participation. However, his view of the present education system reveals an oppressive mode and not one of optimism, as can be seen from the following quote:

'A community is a place in which people face each other over time in all their human variety: good parts, bad parts, and all the rest. Such places promote the highest quality of life possible – lives of engagement and participation. This happens in unexpected ways, but it never happens when you've spent more than a decade listening to other people talk and trying to do what they tell you to do, trying to please them after the fashion of schools. It makes a real lifelong

difference whether you avoid that training or it traps you' (2005, p. 51).

Gatto's (2005) research suggests the benefits of communities as opposed to networks, and this is echoed in the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) who lay down the foundations for, and explore, their notion of Communities of Practice.

According to the work of Lave and Wenger (1991), a Community of Practice is a collection of people that are 'bound' together by purpose, location, activity, values etc. This could include secondary teachers in a school, specific subject teachers, year seven, year eight, year nine pupils, or peer groups. All of these groups or communities can take on individual and specific identities that set them apart from other such groups by the practices that they engage in. Wubbels (2007), whose research was informed by Lave and Wenger (1991), defines 'Community of Practice' as:

'The process of social learning that occurs when people who have a common interest in some subject or problem collaborate over an extended period to share ideas, find solutions and build innovations' (2007, p. 226).

Similarly, the definition by Barab et al. (2004) uses phrases such as 'a persistent sustained social network of individuals', who share

beliefs, values and experiences 'focused on common practice' (2007, p. 226). The experiences in school are different for each group or community, as they share different tools, symbols, roles, language etc. that help to shape their communities. According to Wenger (1991), practice is what goes on, what is said, and as importantly, what is unsaid. Although not directly referring to the hidden curriculum, Wenger lists aspects of practices that are implicit to this, such as; tacit conversations, subtle cues, 'untold rules of thumb', shared views. Pupil's identity can be viewed as being constructed by performing these practices that are valued by the Communities of Practice's to which the pupil belongs.

Situated learning and the notion of legitimate peripheral participation.

The notion of participation is central to the theory of Community of Practice and developed from Lave's work (1997) amongst Liberian tailor apprentices. They initially observed the more experienced tailors and then progressed to simple pieces and then, through acquiring skill and expertise, they could make complex garments. Lave described the first stage (novice; present, but no action) as 'peripheral participation' and the final stage (making complex garments) as 'full participation.' The novice suffers from a lack of experience and hence participation is 'legitimate' and learning is thus constructed as 'legitimate peripheral participation.' Here the novice moves from peripheral to full participation and from novice to expert.

Learning is seen as participation in that community, and the amount of participation determines the amount of success in that community.

If this model is applied to school, it becomes apparent how important participation in communities is, as learning is the process of moving from the peripheral towards the full element of participation. The process, if smooth, makes a lot of sense: however, in secondary schools, there could potentially be a number of obstacles that may prevent this full participation and prevent maximal learning potential. Paramount to this is the fact that pupils seem to have at least two very different communities of practice to master; break-time and class-room. I say at least, because the thesis focuses predominantly on the school day, but as this is an holistic approach, the home community must not be neglected. Pupils are expected to be able to negotiate their identities in an appropriate manner that allows them to eventually fully participate in both these communities (without any behaviour that is inconsistent to that community). I would suggest that, often, the pupil's identity is unsure because they may not know how to define themselves, because they are expected to switch-off suddenly from break-time to class-room. This is supported by Lave and Wenger (1991) who suggest that identity is a distributed phenomenon. Break-time and the class-room are two separate domains and, as such, pupils (and, indeed, teachers) need to be able to, firstly, understand and, secondly, be able to negotiate the skills necessary to function successfully within them. It may not work by

just transferring skills from one domain to the other as they may be inappropriate.

Unfortunately, not everyone may have the skills to attain full participation and, in fact, Wenger suggests that two forms of non-participation are 'peripherality' and 'marginality'. By not having full participation in one community may mean that the pupil can develop fuller participation in others. An example of this is when pupils bend the school rules to fit into their rebel friendship groups, such as wearing make-up and hitching up skirts. Marginality as a form of non-participation offers restricted participation. This could be when members of opposing groups are made to collaborate with members of groups that they would never normally hang around with.

A key to understanding why some individuals participate and others do not is offered by Wenger, who suggests six such reasons for this:

1. How we locate ourselves in a social landscape
2. What we care about and what we neglect
3. What we attempt to know and understand and what we choose to ignore
4. With whom we seek connections and whom we avoid
5. How we engage and direct our activities
6. How we attempt to steer our trajectories

Although this model seems to suggest reasons why each person's participation or non-participation may be different than another's, it still seems to neglect the possible interconnectedness of each of these factors, and the general complexities involved in participation generally. It certainly does not directly focus on the issue of friendships and their impact on learning. Similarly, it assumes that the pupil has choice about belonging to different communities, but with marginalisation, although the pupil may want to belong, this is not always accepted. Much of the time the individual must negotiate their identity in an attempt to belong.

Negotiation of meaning and distributed cognitions

Within a community of practice, the term 'situated learning' can be used to link learning and the social situation where it happens, along with the tasks and interactions between people. By changing the direction of focus away from conceptual structures and cognitive processes, (as has been the previous focus for research into learning), it focuses on how social engagements can provide a context for learning. The pupil will not just absorb abstract knowledge and transfer it and reapply in later contexts, instead, they 'acquire the skill to perform by actually engaging (or participating) in the process, under the attenuated conditions of legitimate peripheral participation' (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p.14). Legitimate peripheral participation refers to 'the process by which newcomers become included in a community of practice' (1998, p. 100).

Peripherality and legitimacy were seen as types of 'modification', necessary to allow participation. The belief that learning takes place in the individual's mind has now (with this approach) been turned upside-down with the assumption that learning occurs within a participation framework, and thus is 'mediated by the differences of perspectives among the co-participants' (1991, p. 15). The pupils within the school community and, therefore, taking part in the learning context, will learn, and this learning will be 'distributed' among the participants. In relation to this community of practice, Lave and Wenger (1991) state that:

'Mastery resides not in the master but in the organisation of the community of practice of which the master is part' (p. 94).

This moves the emphasis away from the teacher and onto the structure of the 'community's learning resources' (1991, p. 91). This particular point, if understood, has the potential to alter the way teachers plan for their lessons, and the types of activities planned to allow effective learning to emerge.

Learning and Communities of Practice

Wubbels (2007) states that a Community of Practice does not have to place learning at its centre or main aim it should be 'assumed' that such a setting would promote learning when necessary. With

previous definitions and assumptions in mind, this implies that there can be a community of practice at break-time, as the focus can be taken off the formal layer and on to the informal, as it seems to meet the above criteria. If learning was the focus, one could also argue for the social learning during break-time, which is a large and important part of an individual's holistic development. The notion of Communities of Practice at break-times is important, as it situates social learning, and offers many skills of the hidden curriculum (discussed earlier) that go on to form useful life skills, as well as connecting members of peer groups in a constructive manner and directly impacting on identity. A further argument developing from this research is to consider break-time and class-room as sub-contexts within the same whole Community of Practice, i.e. schooling or education. These sub-contexts (one informal, one formal) allow for overlapping relationships, negotiating of identities and distributed selves; namely, inter-connected layers of analysis.

Wenger (1998) suggests a way of co-ordinating Communities of Practices, (or in this study, possible sub-contexts), by the use of 'boundary objects' such as tools, documents, concepts, artefacts, memories, stories, techniques, work on the boundaries of Communities of Practice, allowing coordination between Communities of Practice. However, 'brokers' need to be active in creating bridges between such communities. These brokers provide links between communities by introducing parts of one practice into another. If the teachers had more awareness of break-time peer

group activities, then maybe they could act as brokers. However, as Edwards and Miller (2007) suggest, learning may have different purposes in different contexts (i.e. informal, formal) and some learners may want to leave the 'gaps' between break-time and class-room leaving them separate and opaque to adults. It is an understanding of pupils' perceptions that is necessary here, and also how a teacher is able to manage and negotiate their identity and class-room relationships in response to a variety of break-time peer group behaviour, in order to maximise learning. However, one further question to consider within the school environment is how pupils deal with the notion of distributed selves, and whether or not they are able to transfer skills and even identities across contexts successfully, contexts such as break-time and class-room.

The notion of transfer between contexts

Edwards and Miller (2007) seem to also discuss the notion of 'distributed selves' (although they do not directly refer to this), as they accept learning as occurring in a variety of situations, and that learners themselves can be active in and between these domains. They directly refer to issues of 'transfer' which they define as 'the movement of learning and identity from one activity to another,' (2007, p.265). They suggest that learning is situated and contextualised, but this learning can occur both within or between domains. It is this 'between domains' that is important for this study. There is a perception that pupils leave parts of themselves 'at the

metaphorical door of the class-room' because certain learning (i.e. break-time domain) may not be relevant to the class-room learning domain where,

'learning from one site is not necessarily realized as a resource in other sites by either teachers or learners' (2007, p. 267).

The question was raised as to how effectively learners can cross contexts in 'vicarious' learning and, again, importantly for class-room and break-time cultures:

'In what ways can the cultures of learning in everyday life be translated into those of more formal educational practices in the fashioning of learning careers?' (2007, p. 271).

The concept of transfer also shares many similarities with work on transition, sharing its ontology and socio-cultural focus. Much recent research on school transition between primary and secondary education has been carried out by Tobbell et al. (2003, 2005 and 2006). The research generally highlights discontinuities between these two Communities of Practice in terms of the ability to manage this process of change, and even linked this to the cause of, in some cases, poorer educational achievement. The reasons for this seemed inconsistent, which included normative change in adolescence as

well as contextual pressures. Identity and its 'trajectory in the new Community of Practice' were highlighted as a major clue to understanding transition (2005, p. 8).

Identity is naturally, therefore, a complex, flexible, social concept, not static and unchanging. Wenger (1998) sees identity as:

'Relating to the world as a particular mix of the familiar and the foreign, the obvious and the mysterious, the transparent and the opaque...in practice, we know who we are by what is familiar, understandable, usable, negotiable; we know who we are not by what is foreign, opaque, unwieldy, unproductive' (1998, p. 153).

Trajectories

Wenger (1998) uses the term 'trajectory' as a fluid term, not fixed or mapped out, but continuous and one that uses its own energy as well as being influenced by external factors: 'It has a coherence through time that connects the past, the present, and the future' (1998, p. 154). The trajectories identified by Wenger (1998) are: peripheral, inbound, insider, boundary and outbound. These trajectories can be applied to the present study and related to peer groups. Peripheral trajectories may provide access to the community and impact on identity, but may never end up with full participation, which may

provide the security needed for that individual. When a new member joins an already functioning peer group, they 'invest' their identities in the group with the hope of becoming full participants (inbound trajectories). Throughout the peer group, once full participation for some members has been achieved, their identity continues to be re-negotiated in relation to new demands, new tasks, new members etc: This is an example of insider trajectories, whereas 'boundary trajectories' involve:

'Spanning boundaries and linking communities of practice...sustaining an identity across boundaries is one of the most delicate challenges of this kind of brokering work' (1998, p. 154).

This seems to be a skill that is hard to acquire, but in schools most teachers would probably not even realise that this kind of work is in operation. With relation to the final category (outbound trajectories), this may apply to when children come out of the break-time community of practice and into the class-room community of practice, as this involves some of the key points Wenger (1998) mentions, namely; 'developing new relationships, finding a different position with respect to a community, and seeing the world and oneself in new ways' (p. 155). When a child goes from break-time to lesson (and vice versa), they are often mixing in different friendship groups and have to renegotiate their identity and adapt their 'play-ground antics' through a new set of interactions. Similarly, when friendships

break up, the individual must re-invest their identity into other groups and maybe enter at a different position, in-line with the expectations of the new group.

Each of these trajectories, therefore, can have implications for identity and provide a possible way to understand schoolchildren's shifting identities in and between communities of practice. This can be extended to the home as well to add even more complexity to the already complex situation. Again, most of this 'work' may remain opaque to some teachers and a better understanding of these issues are necessary, as presently there is no relevant literature on 'transfer' between break-time and the class-room, possibly because this issue has not been identified. Similarly, socio-cultural work underpinned by Lave and Wenger (1991) is a fairly new focus for educational research.

Chapter summary

In this chapter I have provided a summary of some of the friendship research to date which is predominantly underpinned by the traditional model of learning.

By reviewing Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, it revealed how important the individual was as a learner. Moreover, the learning relationship was emphasised, and the quality of relationship (constructed by the learner and more able partner, in this case, pupil

and teacher) was paramount for the successful emergence of the ZPD to allow participation in the practice of the class-room. Although this theory does explain how learning occurs as an exchange of knowledge and acquisition of the skills involved along-side performance, it can not explain other external factors impacting on learning, such as friendships and other contexts generally.

Both Bronfenbrenner (1979) and the work of Lave and Wenger (1991), however, can help to explain these complexities. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model reveals the processes of enablement and disablement in Communities of Practices, through the use of proximal and distal relationships. Here, the individual is at the centre of these interactive systems (microsystems, mesosystems and macrosystems). Participation is embedded within these systems and identities are shaped by the interaction between them. For Lave and Wenger, the emphasis is on the importance of participation within a variety of Communities of Practice, along with the notion of distributed selves. Their work reconceptualises learning as experience. The experience represents the levels of participation within a Community of Practice and allows learning to become synonymous with participation and as such the socio-cultural perspective can become a theory of learning.

The following chapter will discuss the rationale behind the choice of research methods used within this qualitative thesis and describe how these reflect, and are part of, an interpretative framework. The

process of data collection will be described, along with the link between my ontology, epistemology and methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

This chapter will continue to develop the critical approach out-lined in the previous chapter, where in the literature I have argued for the pupils' perspective, (who seem to be the holders of the funds of knowledge) and, secondly, for the importance of context and experience of context. It can be seen that the arguments developed in chapters two and three will require methodologies that will allow access to this kind of data. The interpretive framework allows such a privilege to occur naturally.

I will begin this section by revealing the interconnectedness of my ontology, epistemology and methodology and outline my rationale for focusing on the interpretive framework. In connection to this, I will outline my data collection plan for the Pilot Study and Main Study, and explain ethical clearance and any ethical issues that arose. The three research methods used in the Main Study (with reference to the Pilot Study) will then be critically discussed, namely; focus groups, one-to-one interviews and participant observation. Once each method has been described, I will discuss in more detail how I actually used the methods to collect data in the school. The details of the analysis can be found in chapter four.

The link between my ontology, epistemology and methodology

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) state that:

'The gendered, multi-culturally situated researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that he or she then examines in specific ways (methodology, analysis)' (p. 28, 2008).

They reveal the inter-connectedness of ontology, epistemology and methodology and, as such, highlight how the methodology is informed by both ontology and epistemology (which also inform the research aims). My epistemology stems from my ontology, that was formed from my previous teaching experience (which was discussed in the prologue). From my previous teaching experience, I came to believe that human beings, by their very nature, are 'social beings' and that peer groups form a large part of a pupil's life in school and, ultimately, impact upon their identity.

Our understandings and meanings in life (including knowledge and learning) emerge through our interactions with others in context, and learning is, therefore, situated (as discussed in chapter two). My epistemological position situates people firmly in their contexts, and hence led to the focus on socio-cultural theory in chapter three as a possible theoretical framework to explore. The interpretive framework

allows me access into the lives of those that I want to research, and lets me holistically explore my three research aims.

Therefore, I need to acknowledge that my beliefs are guided by my action on the world as a researcher, and accept also, as Denzin and Lincoln suggest, that 'all research is interpretive; it is guided by the researcher's set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied.' (2008, p. 31). I have tried to be as honest as I can in providing the reader with the reasoning behind my ontological and epistemological background, and hope that this will help to provide an understanding of why it is so important to situate my research quite clearly within the socio-cultural framework.

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) highlight four interpretive paradigms, of which I can relate to some of the constructivist- interpretive paradigm assumptions that they describe: they acknowledge the notion of multiple realities, accept a subjectivist epistemology, (where the knower and respondent co-create meanings) and suggest a need for a naturalistic set of methodologies. My epistemology, therefore, flows from my ontological position, and the most natural way to access the knowledge of peer groups and learning is to use methods from the interpretive framework. The methodology (or strategy of inquiry) for this interpretive paradigm is closely guided by my research aims, which in turn, relate directly to the purpose of the study. Methods that were thought best to access this information were chosen and include; focus groups, one-to-one semi-structured

interviews and participant observation, which will be discussed later on in this chapter.

Due to the nature of qualitative research, there is no one truth and multiple interpretative communities each with its own beliefs and criteria for evaluating interpretations. I do not want to claim truth, as such, I just want to be able to present data that is trustworthy, creditable, dependable and so on. I want to try and understand the world of friendships, and discover any continuities or discontinuities that may exist between teachers and pupils in relation to the importance and function of peer groups during break-times and within the class-room (research aim 1). I also want to explore pupils' negotiations of social relationships in the school environment (research aim 2) and, finally, I want (through the application of the socio-cultural framework – research aim 3) to be able to provide rich data that enlightens educational professionals and make them inquisitive to find out more about the implications of adopting this approach, if only to question the present structure of the educational system for a second; any doubt can become productive. Within this framework, words such as 'trustworthiness', 'credibility', 'transferability', 'dependability' replace terms such as 'objectivity', internal and external 'validity', 'reliability' and other such positivist terms.

Similarly, the area of 'reliability' in quantitative work attaches itself to the concept of 'replication', where much qualitative work dotes on the

uniqueness of situations and is often criticised for its lack of generalisability. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) see 'replicability' as representing reliability if certain guidelines have been adhered to. They ask the question as to whether the same interpretation would have been made in a different place or time, or of different phenomena, and whether another researcher from the same epistemological and ontological background, observing the same phenomena, would have interpreted the data the same way. Again, the over-riding feature for me in this present thesis will be the fact that qualitative data will be useful to understand the inner world of peer groups, and the importance and impact of friendship within the school day. Moreover, I need access to behaviour in context to allow me to be able to see how friendships can influence learning, and to find out how aware teachers are of this influence, and whether or not there is ignorance within this area and, in fact, opportunities for engagement in learning are therefore missed. It is important to focus on context, as individuals in context may allow certain behaviours to emerge.

I am also aware of the multiple realities or explanations that seek to explain human behaviour, but my epistemological position seeks to situate people in their contexts. This ultimately leads to the necessity to access these contexts in order to have a chance at understanding what is happening there. Also, as meanings are constructed and reconstructed in contexts, and the construction is distributed, I must

be aware that my presence may also be part of this construction. Denscombe (2003) reiterates this point in saying that:

'The researcher's self plays a significant role in the production and interpretation of qualitative data' (p. 268).

The self should be seen as 'integral' to the analysis. Rather than remaining distant from the research process, the researcher's own identity, values and beliefs play a role in the production and analysis of the data. This is partly the case due to my professional background in education. With this background, I would argue that my identity, beliefs and values 'enabled' rather than disabled an entry into worlds that 'remain barred to researchers with a different self' (2003, p. 268). However, my main concern here is to be as truthful as possible, and to add a new voice to such an under-theorised area, in order to engage others. The socio-cultural theory will be used as a tool to help explain the emerging data and make sense of it. As my epistemological position flows from my ontology, and linked to the arguments made above, there seems little choice but to carry out qualitative and naturalistic research.

Section summary

In the previous section I have tried to provide a rationale for choosing the interpretive framework, which naturally flowed from my

ontological and epistemological position. In the following section, I intend to discuss how the Pilot Study informed my Main Study and discuss the practical elements of the research, such as the ethical issues. I will then introduce the three main methods used for data collection from the interpretive framework in terms of their function (focus groups, one-to-one interviews and participant observation), and describe how I collected the data.

How the Pilot Study informed the Main Study

The Pilot Study was carried out in the same school as the Main Study. The Pilot Study focused on research aim one and research aim three. Both Research aims 1 and 3 along with Research aim 2 will be explored in more detail later on in the Main Study, as not all of these could have been explored in the Pilot study due to the time-scale. I decided to give the pupils a voice and see if their initial responses did support my feelings about friendships and their importance. Also, I wanted to use the Pilot Study to practice using focus groups and semi-structured interviews, to inform me of any methodological issues that may have needed adjusting before carrying out the Main Study. The table below shows how the two research aims were explored in the Pilot Study and how the questions asked reflect the research aims.

Method of data collection	Data form	Who?	Research Aims addressed
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Focus Groups	Taped interviews & typed transcript	One group from Year 7 One group from Year 8 One group from Year 9	<p>1. To explore continuities and discontinuities in understandings between Key Stage 3 teachers and pupils in relation to the importance and functions of peer groups during break-times and within the class-room.</p> <p>3. To explore the usefulness and application of socio-cultural theory in understanding Key Stage 3 friendships and pedagogy.</p>
One to one interviews (Semi structured)	Taped interviews & typed transcript	Interview with present KS3 Co-ordinator	<p>1. To explore continuities and discontinuities in understandings between Key Stage 3 teachers and pupils in relation to the importance and functions of peer groups during break-times and within the class-room.</p> <p>3. To explore the usefulness and application of socio-cultural theory in understanding Key Stage 3 friendships and pedagogy.</p>

Table 3.1: Data collection for the Pilot Study

When did the research take place?

The Focus group interviews took place on a Thursday morning and lasted about three-quarters of an hour each. They followed the schools' timetable hourly sessions, so Year 7 was 9.10 a.m. – 10.10 a.m., Year 8 was 10.10 a.m. – 11.10 a.m. and Year 9 was after break-time at 11.30 a.m. – 12.30 p.m. The semi-structured interview with the Key Stage Three co-ordinator lasted about one hour in the afternoon between 2.30 p.m. and 3.30 p.m. (when school finishes). All these times were suitable with other teachers, the participants and the Head teacher. The location was in a quiet mobile class-room and a notice was placed on the door to cut down the chance of being interrupted and to reduce any possibilities of external noise. (The same format was followed in the Main Study). The table below demonstrates the link between the questions asked and research aims 1 and 3.

Theme	Questions	Research Aim Addressed
Importance of friends	Do you think it is important to have friends? How many friends do you think are enough? Can you think of an example when your friendship has helped you in school? Can you think of examples where your friendships have got	1. To explore continuities and discontinuities in understandings between Key Stage 3 teachers and pupils in relation to the importance and functions of peer groups during break-times and within the class-room. 3. To explore the

	<p>you into trouble at school?</p> <p>Can you tell me why you chose to be friends with your particular group?</p> <p>How do you feel in lessons when you are not with the whole of your friendship group? (Do you mind being with others?)</p> <p>Do you always get on with all the other groups in your year?</p> <p>Can you describe any names given to other groups?</p> <p>Do you swap groups?</p>	<p>usefulness and application of socio-cultural theory in understanding Key Stage 3 friendships and pedagogy.</p>
Peer group activities during break-time and lessons	<p>Can you describe the activities that you do during break-times with your school friends?</p> <p>Can you give me some examples of what you talk about during break-times?</p> <p>Do you learn anything at break-times?</p> <p>Do you ever plan what you are going to do in your break-times?</p>	<p>1. To explore continuities and discontinuities in understandings between Key Stage 3 teachers and pupils in relation to the importance and functions of peer groups during break-times and within the class-room.</p> <p>3. To explore the usefulness and application of socio-cultural theory in understanding Key Stage 3 friendships and pedagogy.</p>
The effect of context change	<p>Do you think some children may struggle with this concept of switching between contexts i.e. play-ground vs class-room?</p> <p>Do teachers fully understand that children may have a problem coping with this?</p> <p>Do you see break-time as 'your' time rather</p>	<p>3. To explore the usefulness and application of socio-cultural theory in understanding Key Stage 3 friendships and pedagogy.</p>

	<p>than 'school's' time? Can you give any examples of how your break-time talk is different from class-room talk? Are your friends different in school compared to out of school? How can the transition between break-time and school time be more effectively achieved?</p>	
How break-time activities affect the next lesson and any pedagogical consequences	<p>At the end of break-time, what do you do if you have not finished your break-time chat: Do you carry it on in class or wait and finish it off during the next break? Does the above apply if you are in the middle of an argument? Can you give me any examples of how 'falling out' during breaks altered your later behaviour in class?</p>	3. To explore the usefulness and application of socio-cultural theory in understanding Key Stage 3 friendships and pedagogy.

Table 3.2: How the Questions asked In the Year 7, 8 and 9 Focus groups and the semi-structured Interview with the KS3 Co-ordinator relate to the research aims (1 and 3).

Five initial themes emerged from the Pilot study that provided topics for discussion in the focus groups and one-to-one interviews for the Main Study. The themes that emerged (including related questions) were: Oppositional Barriers to Identity (them v us, same v different, break-time v class-room), Communication Networks, Resistance to

Homework, Learning Process, and Spatial Awareness. (See Appendix 1b).

Oppositional barriers to identity was all about situations that prevented the full sense of the self being achieved, where identity seemed to be under threat by external influences such as teachers or other peer group members. Communication networks revealed the shifting nature of friendships in relation to new technologies. Computers, mobile phones etc. seem to have extended peer group communication networks beyond the normal school day. Pupils often keep in touch during the evening and any unresolved problems from the night before can be brought into school. This allows break-time-time to continue as soon as school has finished and allows home to become an integral part of the school day in terms of continued communication using technology. This can be both positive, through school sites, and negative, through possible cyber-bullying. Resistance to homework became apparent in the interviews and seemed to impact on time with friends. The fourth category 'friendships as a developmental and a learning process' revealed that there was conflict between what society expects (learning institution) and the pupils' focus (social institution). The final category was in relation to spatial awareness where groupings of friends and their seating arrangements were very important for the pupils.

In conclusion, the Pilot Study revealed that negotiating identities and managing social relationships was a key element in a school pupil's

life, and there was often tension between the personal and the social, as well as between the function of school (learning institution or social institution), and that pupils' peer groups behaviour during break-time-time and within cyberspace can impact negatively on learning. The nature of friendship seems to have shifted in response to advancing technologies.

Socio-cultural theories have been useful to bridge the gap between these tensions and offer alternative understandings of how to view context, and especially the interconnectedness of settings in a more holistic approach, especially Lave and Wenger (1991) in their communities of practice work, and Bronfenbrenner (1979) with the ecological model. All learning is distributed, and to ignore the break-time behaviour and any broader relationships means that there is a danger that the context of learning is misunderstood.

Changes made from the Pilot Study and how these have contributed to my research skills in the Main Study.

The Pilot Study made me reflect on practical issues such as organisation and technical elements (in relation to recording focus groups and one-to-one interviews). Regarding organisation, in the Pilot Study a couple of pupil's forgot to turn up, so I reminded pupils of their times by inserting a piece of paper into the registers the day before the research, and again in the morning of the research, and I

was offered sixth formers as 'runners' to help collect any pupil's who may have still forgotten.

The tape-recorder and electrical supply was checked, but I also had batteries in case of a power cut or any faulty socket. I also learned from the Pilot Study to label the tapes prior to the groups arriving to avoid any confusion as each tape looked the same externally. These small adjustments meant that the whole process of interviewing could run smoothly, and added to this was the request for a different room: in the Pilot Study a small mobile was kindly offered, but it had many external distractions including noise, and it was too small to comfortably sit around in groups. An upstairs spacious room was offered, which was private but also overlooked some of the break-time areas so served as a cue to some of the groups. Therefore, the Pilot Study enhanced my research skills by making the process run smoothly with less technical or organisational distractions.

Ethical clearance and ethical issues

The research for both the Pilot Study and the Main Study was subject to the ethics committee of the Open University. (The submission to the committee can be found in Appendix 3a).

Access

Previously, in the Pilot Study, access was straightforward as I was employed by the head teacher and I was working with the pupils on a part-time basis. I was already 'in' the school and respected. However, since then, a new headmistress started in September and many key staff left (including the previous Key Stage 3 co-ordinator) who I had previously interviewed. The parameters of access shifted considerably for this Main Study: as Delamont states:

'Access is a moment-by-moment process of negotiation and trust that can be rescinded at any time by head teacher, teachers, parents or students' (2008, p.16).

However, I wrote a letter to the new head teacher and access was approved. (See Appendix 3b).

The secondary school

Once access was granted, I talked to each registration group in Key Stage 3 about my research, and gave out a letter for parents that included a consent form to any of those pupil's who expressed an interest. (See Appendix 3c). The consent forms were returned quickly and the research was arranged for after the autumn half-term to suit teachers and pupils. I also sent a letter to the staff (via the head teacher) that explained about my research and asked for

volunteers for the one-to-one interviews as well as setting out details of the participant observations. I put a list up in the staff-room for teachers to sign if they were interested, and gave anyone who did not want me coming into their lessons during the observations a chance to express this, so I could rearrange my dates. Fortunately all the staff were very supportive and I managed to have eight staff volunteers for the interviews and was welcomed into the class-room by all the staff.

My role as researcher within the school

King's work (1978) in a primary school had real-life resemblance to my situation. King (1978) was a secondary school teacher and, although observing in a primary school, he emphasised the same difficulties that could present themselves in my research: firstly, he had to take on the role of observer and not become a member of the teaching staff. I already knew, and had befriended, many of the teaching staff due to my previous time at the school, and I saw this as an advantage and not a disadvantage, as I would hope I had gained their trust/respect both among pupils and staff, and believed that both felt my research would benefit them or others like them in the future. I hope that the teachers viewed me as a non-judgemental observer who could enlighten them on peer group interactions both within the class-room and during break-times.

Debriefing

During my meeting with the new head teacher before the Main Study commenced, I gave her a summary of my Year one report to read, and explained how the emerged themes would loosely form the topics that the semi-structured interviews would follow. I also tried to keep the head teacher up-dated with my research (where I was up to, what was left to do), but this was verbally as we passed in corridors (as her time was precious, as the school was being inspected in the Spring-term).

At the end of the research, I thanked all my pupils and staff by offering a small gift to each of them. I reminded them of my title and how their input was invaluable for research and at the same time reminded the pupil's of respect for each other, and confidentiality of taking part in this research. I also offered a summary of the finished thesis to the head teacher and stated that the whole thesis would be available if requested.

Ethical issues arising within the research

Throughout the whole research at the school, three potential ethical/sensitive situations arose which I had to deal with. The first was in the Pilot Study and involved the use of Bratz dolls representing Voodoo dolls and being thrown out of class-room windows when certain pupils walked past. The then Key Stage 3 co-

ordinator was thankfully aware of this situation. The second ethical issue involved a mobile phone being used inappropriately. The pupil was in a small focus group with her two other friends when she stated that she had taken a picture on her phone of a teacher. Her friends were shocked at her disclosure. I had to speak to her and get her to delete it in front of me. I then alerted the Key-stage co-ordinator of the issue but did not at that point disclose her name. I explained that the pupil had deleted the picture and the teacher stated that she was happy with that and the matter was not taken any further. I talked to the pupil about the possible consequences of her actions and then informed her that I had talked to the co-ordinator who was satisfied that the matter need not be taken any further or her name revealed.

The only other delicate situation that I encountered occurred in the middle of my fieldwork, which involved a teacher who had an inspector in her lesson (with my Year 8 group), plus her normal support teacher (for one of the class pupils). The teacher did not seem to have been given much notice of the inspectors' presence and there was an awkward feeling in the air when she briefly spoke to me at lunch-time. The teacher (who seemed to be well liked by the pupils that I had spoken to) was a mature, newly qualified, female teacher who had done one year at the school, but during one lesson in the mini-inspection, an incident occurred with one peer group and the lesson was deemed to be unsatisfactory. A couple of year 9 girls had had a disagreement (from one of my focus groups, and they and

the teacher actually talk about this instance on the two separate tapes), which the inspector picked up on, and thought the teacher should have intervened earlier (as no work was being done). This incident escalated, and the inspector seemed to request that the teacher had her probation year extended. The inspector then came back to oversee the teaching of this teacher on about four more occasions. This was a very unusual situation to be in, as the mini-inspection had finished a few weeks ago, the rest of the inspectors had gone in their official capacity and would not be back until the agreed date after Christmas sometime.

The lesson took place in a very small and cramped mobile. As the inspector never came up to me at all, and we were both writing notes, I thought I ought to explain what I was doing there at the end. He seemed oblivious to the research and nodded politely at my explanation of my presence there. He was sat on the table of girls next to me and I was sat at the side out of the way, but in close proximity to my group (who were split but close by).

Summary of ethical precautions

- Informed consent from pupil's parents and teachers.
- Anonymity – name of the school and of pupils and teachers have been changed. Although the school is in Wales, I have not stated which part. I can not however guarantee complete anonymity as the data may be discussed at meetings and

children may recall their participation to wider forums. Also, many teachers (and a few pupils) have left the school since the Pilot Study.

- Right to withdraw – both the pupils and the teachers have this right ongoing, even now the research has finished and I respect this right.
- Confidentiality – regarding what is said within the focus groups remaining anonymous (in transcript) and respect for the situation and one another in terms of keeping everything discussed as confidential as possible.
- Data protection – all data are kept in a locked cabinet and the tapes will be destroyed on completion of the thesis.
- Respect for individuals – I was careful of not demanding their resources or interrupting within the lessons and was open about what I was writing. I let two teachers read the notes that I was making and a number of pupils asked to see what I had written on rare occasions.
- Debriefing reports – I thanked each person who had supported my research and thanked them for their contribution. I also thanked the whole staff, even those not involved directly in my research by leaving a small gift in the staff-room along with a card, thanking them for being so welcoming and accommodating.

General comments

As my research was based around the day-to-day practices of the peer groups within the school, I was careful not to interfere with the school day, especially in the participant observation in the class-rooms. As such, I tried to position myself in an unobtrusive place near the groups, but often near the back of the class-room. I also did not contribute in the class-room unless invited to do so. Occasionally the pupils in my groups would ask for help and I would explain what to do as quickly and quietly as possible, or refer them to the teacher.

Similarly in the play-ground I made notes as I walked around or sat on the bench at the edge of the play-ground. Sometimes the ball from the game of football rolled towards me, so I kicked it back and on one occasion briefly joined in by invitation. Around the rest of the outdoors, I tended to talk to the pupil's to find out what their games or talk involved, and wrote up the notes as soon as possible.

Clearly I had a privileged position in comparison to the pupils (and even the teachers) as I'm an adult and not subject to the school rules or regulations, but I did not abuse this position and respected the school environment and those within it.

Section summary

The previous section provided a rationale for using the interpretive framework and discussed the link between my ontology, epistemology, and methodology. I explained how the Pilot Study had informed my Main Study and discussed generally the ethical clearance. Similarly, any potential ethical issues were discussed along with how they were dealt with. The following section will critically discuss the three main methods of data collection (focus groups, one-to-one semi-structured interviews and participant observation) and I will explain how these methods were used to collect data within the secondary school to effectively explore my three research aims.

Methods of data collection

The data collection was carried out in a secondary school in Wales and access was fairly straightforward as I had worked within the school previously. Also, the school welcomed students from local colleges and respected any new developments within education. Many teachers often went on courses to improve and up-date their professional development, and 8 teachers willingly offered to help provide data for the research. Similarly, the data was also collected from 44 pupils across the Key Stage Three spectrum where the ages ranged from 11 years old (Year 7) up to 14 years old (Year 9).

The three methods of data collection used in the main study are presented below to help the reader situate each method within the whole research thesis. Each method is then individually presented and both the method and the data collection explained in more detail.

Research Aims Addressed	<p>1. To explore continuities and discontinuities in understandings between Key Stage 3 teachers and pupils in relation to the importance and functions of peer groups during break-times and within the class-room.</p> <p>2. To explore pupils' negotiations and social relationships in the school environment.</p> <p>3. To explore the usefulness and application of socio-cultural theory in understanding Key Stage 3 friendships and pedagogy.</p>		
Method of data collection	Focus Groups	One to one interviews (Semi structured)	Participant Observation
Data form	Taped interviews & typed transcript	Taped interviews & typed transcript	Written observations and typed transcript
Data collected from	<p>Year 7 – two groups (6 pupils and 8 pupils)</p> <p>Year 8 – two groups (5 pupils and 3 pupils)</p> <p>Year 9 – four groups (7pupils, 7 pupils, 5 pupils and 3 pupils)</p> <p>[8 Focus Groups across KS3 – 44 pupils in</p>	8 Teachers (including new KS3 Co-ordinator)	<p>Year 7 (6 pupils)</p> <p>Year 8 (3 pupils)</p> <p>Year 9 (7 pupils)</p>

	total]		
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Table 3.3: Data collection plan for the main study

Interviews

There were two types of interviews used in this Main Study; focus groups (with pupils) and semi-structured interviews (teachers). The table below describes a number of different interviews in relation to; location, the interviewer’s job, the types of questions asked and the reason for interviewing. These factors must therefore be considered when carrying out the interviews.

Type	Setting	Role of Interviewer	Question Format	Purpose
Focus group	Formal – preset	Directive	Structured	Exploratory Pretest
Brainstorming	Formal or informal	Nondirective	Very structured	Exploratory
Nominal/ Delphi	Formal	Directive	Structured	Pretest Exploratory
Field, natural	Informal spontaneous	Moderately non-directive	Very structured	Exploratory phenomenological
Field, formal	Preset, but in field	Somewhat directive	Semi-structured	Phenomenological

Table: 3.4 Types of Interviews and Dimensions (Fontana and Frey, 1991).

These choices referred to within the above table were also at the forefront of research conducted by Scott and Usher (1996) who state that:

'Interview data are the result of a series of selections made by the researcher both before and during the fieldwork. The researcher makes a number of decisions about which setting to conduct their research in, who to interview, where and when those interviews should take place, and even more fundamentally, which instruments to use. In short the data-set is a selection from all the other possible data-sets that could have been made. The researchers' account, as a consequence, is positioned' (p. 65).

I accept that my data were also collected at a particular time and place and, as such, I make no claim to be representative of all pupils' or teachers' experiences, but it does represent the pupils' voices and the teachers' voices that have taken part and may enable me to understand some neglected experiences of friendships in some depth. The data that emerge from interviews (and in fact participant observation discussed in the later section) should, therefore, contribute to an understanding of friendships and learning, rather than to provide universal answers, and may provide a basis for future research.

Moreover, Scott and Usher (1996) discuss three reasons for choosing interviews as a method:

- i) Interviews allow the researcher to access past events.

- ii) Interviews allow the researcher access to situations where the researcher is not able to be present.
- iii) Interviews allow information to emerge about some situations where permission for access would be refused.

For this thesis, the third point is crucial, as child friendships are in their nature opaque to many adults, which would explain why there is so little research out there about their importance and any affect on their learning. The two types of interviews used in this thesis (focus groups and one-to-one interviews) will be discussed below in the following sections.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are group interviews that centre on interaction within the group with the discussion originating from the researcher's supplied topics (and in this case from the emerged themes in the Pilot Study). The researcher becomes a 'moderator' for the group and, as Morgan states:

'The hallmark of focus groups is their explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group' (1997, p. 2).

Morgan (1997) believes that to assess if focus groups are an appropriate method of data collection, researchers only have to question how easily and actively the group would discuss the research topic. In this study, the groups are the research topic, so this aspect could not be more central and relevant.

The advantages of focus groups as discussed by Culley (2008) include: helping participants to talk about their experiences in a less pressurised situation in comparison to a one-to-one interview situation, and the ability to provide group situations that can be observed by researchers and analysed. Also discussed is the ability to provide rich data and their usefulness for research topics that have been poorly understood, or as a method to discover new ways of understanding, which is of paramount importance in this thesis. Culley (2008) also acknowledges and values the participants' contributions. Issues that they see as important are provided as data to be interpreted in context. This is also an advantage for me of this method, as the importance of context is highlighted. The main limitation of this method, however, seems to be in relation to the time taken in preparation and organisation and the time taken in transcription. Also, there may be an ethical issue relating to the focus of the investigation because most typical focus groups rely on bringing a group together, maybe once or twice, for the purpose of conducting a one-off research session and then they do not meet again, but in this study, due to its sample and its research focus, the group stay together within the same environment day-in day-out. As

Michell (1997) explains, 'for schoolchildren the situation is very different' (p. 37). Pupils will hear disclosures and comments from their peers and although the group will be asked to keep all discussion confidential, this may not happen and some comments may be distributed into the wider peer group networks or, nowadays, even on Facebook or other electronic devices.

Size of focus groups

Barbour and Kitzinger (2001) suggest that many researchers believe that focus groups should ideally consist of between 8 and 12 participants, but stress that this number is often too many for various sociological studies and seemed to still see three as a viable number and representative, whilst still being able to successfully function as a focus group. It can be seen that, from table 3.3 above (p 91), one group had three members in the focus group and the others had between five and eight.

Data collection

The friendship groups already pre-existed within each year group (Year 7, Year 8 and Year 9). When I went round each class to introduce my research, I asked the girls who expressed an interest in taking part in the research to put their name down on a piece of paper that I provided and then underneath, make a list of the names of their friendship group or groups if any had more than one. This

information was used when designing the focus groups as it allowed me to put friendship groups together.

When the signed consent forms were collected from the school office I found that I had many more than I needed for the research, but I really did not want to upset anyone who really did want to discuss the importance of peer groups with me: in the name of research (and the fact that many of the pupils had relatives in the school as teachers or office/canteen staff), I let everybody with consent slips take part and arranged a few more focus group sessions (alerting the head of these and gaining permission for them as well as securing extra time in the room offered to me for my research). Below is a summary of the pupils who took part and the number in their friendship group.

Year 7 - 6 pupils (one friendship group)

Year 7 - 8 pupils (one friendship group)

Year 8 - 3 pupils, plus 2 others (two friendship groups)

Year 8 - 3 pupils (one friendship group)

Year 9 - 7 pupils (one friendship group)

Year 9 - 7 pupils (one friendship group)

Year 9 - 5 pupils (one friendship group)

Year 9 – (3 pupils).

This gave me 44 pupils in total and 8 separate focus groups, with a spread across the whole of Key Stage 3 and allowed exploration of my three research aims. See table below for more information on the pupils.

Focus Group	Pupil Numbers	Year Group	Main locations during break/lunch	Group Self-label	Label given by other Groups
A	1	7	Roundabout (and Woods).	'Randoms'	
	2				
	3				
	4				
	5				
	6				
B	7	7	Roundabout.		
	8				
	9				
	10				
	11				
	12				
	13				
	14				
C	15	8	Form Rooms.		'Popular' (by 16C)
	17				
	19				
	16		Football yard/ field with boys.		
	18				
D	20	8	Form Rooms.		
	21				
	22				
E	23	9	Guarding Friendship tree. Walking round school grounds (talking/listening to music). Form Rooms.	'Ace Gang'	
	24				
	25				
	26				
	27				
	28				
	29				
F	30	9	Mainly Form Rooms.		'Geeks' 'Homework Group'
	31				
	32				
	33				
	34				
	35				
	36				
G	37	9	Showers/toilets	'Normal'	'Snobs'

	38 39 40 41		or Form Room	'Gobbers'	'Popular' (by H)
H	42 43 44	9	Year 8's class- room or own Form Room	'Chavs'	'The Dark Horse' and 'Chavs' (A) 'Chavs' (E) and (G)

Table: 3.5 Information on pupils taking part in the focus groups

Location and time frame

I was offered a very accessible but quiet room for my research and it was opened up for me to use from 8.30 a.m. up until I had finished at the end of dinner-time (1.30 p.m.). I had asked for access to a socket for my tape recorder and a table (or tables) that would fit a maximum of eight chairs around. The interviewing conditions were very comfortable.

Most of the focus groups were all done on one day and the time slots were put in the registers to remind the pupils. Two groups however, (due to illness on this day) were taped on time slots that were convenient for their teachers and themselves. Their focus groups took place in either a quiet hall or an empty mobile, again with minimal distractions. All eight taped focus group interviews lasted between 30-50 minutes each and the numbers in each group varied from three to eight, with most groups being composed of either five, seven or eight pupils.

Topics covered

Although the Main Study used many of the questions that were asked in the Pilot Study (see pages 78 – 80), the topics discussed were initially more informed by the five themes that emerged (i.e. Oppositional Barriers to Identity, Communication Networks, Resistance to Homework, Learning Process, and Spatial Awareness).

General comments

I used one group of three as they were a very cohesive group and were one of the more 'eventful' groups within the year. They valued each other's company and would talk quite openly when together. They consented to take part in the study, but only wanted to be with each other and not with other groups. I doubt very much if I would have got the richness and depth of data they provided if others from other groups were there. They may not have taken part, or if they did, they may not have been so honest and forthcoming with their real examples and thoughts about other groups.

One-to-one semi-structured Interviews

Data collection

Of the eight teachers that were available for interview and gave their consent, there was a mixture of experienced, full-time, part-time,

male and female, and a spread of subjects. All the teachers that I approached seemed supportive of my research. The table below shows the background of the teachers interviewed.

Teacher	Gender (M/F)	Main Subject Taught in KS3	New to school (Sept 2009)	Experienced (Exp) or Newly Qualified (NQ)	Full or Part time (FT/PT)	Other positions/duties
1	F	Welsh		Exp	F/T	KS3 Co-ordinator. Head of Welsh.
2	F	History		Exp	F/T	SENCO
3	F	English	✓	NQ	F/T	
4	M	History	✓	Exp	P/T	
5	F	Maths	✓	NQ	F/T	Year 8 Form Tutor a.m. (shared with teacher '7' below) Looks after Boarders
6	M	Chemistry	✓	Exp	F/T	Head of Science. Year 7 Form Tutor
7	F	Design & Technology	✓	NQ	F/T	Head of Design & Technology. Year 8 Form Tutor p.m. (shared with teacher '5' above)
8	F	Geography		Exp	F/T	Head of Geography. Year 9 Form Tutor

Table 3.6: Gender, background, experience and subject details of Teachers Interviewed

One-to-one semi-structured interviews were used to explore my three research aims:

- 1) To explore continuities and discontinuities in understandings between Key Stage 3 teachers and pupils in relation to the importance and functions of peer groups during break-times and within the class-room.**
- 2) To explore pupils' negotiations of social relationships in the school environment.**
- 3) To explore the usefulness and application of socio-cultural theory in understanding Key Stage 3 friendships and pedagogy.**

Interviewing allowed me to gain additional information that may not have been available through observation and hence enriched my data collection.

Location and Time frame

The teachers were all interviewed in a quiet room (usually their own form-room or a quiet class-room). I had to fit the interviews around teaching times and a couple were done during lunch-time but most took place after school. Each interview lasted between twenty-five and forty minutes.

Participant observation

Data collection

I spent two full days each 'in the field' among the girls' friendship groups. One group from each year group in Year 7, 8 and 9 were shadowed for two full days in the same week (Tuesday and Friday), to explore what seems to others as routine aspects of their school life. I wanted to find out about their world from their point of view; their understandings, meaning-makings, perception of reality (along with those of the teachers'). Delamont (2008) also stresses that schools are driven by 'time-specific activities' and often the timetable 'rules much of interaction within the organisation' (p.8). Hence, as I shadowed a group for two full days (one Tuesday, one Friday), I saw a variety of lessons and break-times, and different sequences of lessons over the time period to give a more holistic view of their lives. My observations mainly took place within the class-room or play-ground and, occasionally, around the grounds. The observations were designed to contribute to addressing my three main research aims.

I met the groups as soon as the school buses arrived, and tried to find other members of the group on the play-ground or in their form rooms to chat informally to them, and find out their timetable for the day, and find out generally what had happened in their home lives and school.

Fieldnotes

I wrote up the fieldnotes for the 'shadowing' groups as soon as I could (usually the same night which reiterates the urgency expressed by Denscombe (2004)). There are many suggestions on how to carry out field notes, but most suggest that notes should be taken and written up as soon as possible (no later than the end of the day and sooner if possible) due to the frailness of the human memory. There are different types of notes (as highlighted by Lofland et al., 1995): mental, jotted, full field notes, all of which have their uses. Mental notes may be used when it is inappropriate to take notes, for example if a class had a whole school assembly when I was shadowing them. Jotted notes seem to act as cues for fuller notes and are often inconspicuously written down, to prevent them feeling self-conscious. This type of note-taking could be used during break-time when I wanted them to be themselves and not be conscious of me shadowing them.

From this information, it seems that there is no one 'correct' way to write up notes, but they should be done as soon as possible. There are many variations of techniques for writing up fieldnotes and a selection of uses. Atkinson sees fieldnotes as:

'Writings produced in or in close proximity to 'the field'. Proximity means that fieldnotes are written more or less contemporaneously with the events,

experiences and interactions they describe and recount' (2001, p. 353).

They 'represent' actual accounts and reduce these pieces of action into written accounts, and hence,

'fieldnotes (re)constitute that world in preserved forms that can be reviewed, studied and thought about time and time again' (2001, p. 353).

When fieldnotes were made they were selective in terms of what was observed and written down and, although I was focusing on the peer group involved, an holistic picture was required and the groups' behaviour was affected by the whole context (the teacher and various pupils in the class-room, along with previous events in the break-times), so I tried to observe as much as I could and wrote down as many notes as possible, and, although focusing on the group, I tried not to neglect the whole context.

Atkinson (2001) suggests that if jottings are used from the beginning, people accept this 'note-taker' role. I found that I was accepted in my role and I could make notes in the play-ground and still take part in their discussions or games. The pupils (and teachers) knew that they could read my notes if they wanted to, but, only a couple ever asked to read them. I also spoke to the groups to ask them to sum up their

break-time before their next lesson. Delamont et al. (2008) states that:

‘Fieldwork is only as good as the fieldnotes, and fieldnotes are only as good as the way(s) they are written, written up and analysed’ (p. 47)

Having now discussed the main methods of data collection individually, it would seem sensible to provide a more holistic view of how the methods selected complement each other within the Main Study.

Complementing Methods

It has also been stated by Morgan (1997) that the value that focus groups can add to research when it is used alongside other qualitative methods, such as individual interviews and participant observation (all of which I use in the Main Study). Focus groups fulfil the criteria for interviewing friends as a group, and individual semi-structured interviews thus allow entry into different teachers’ perceptions of children’s friendships. I feel that my professional job as a teacher would allow access into other teachers’ worlds to understand their perceptions, by listening to answers and being non-judgemental, to identify any continuities or discontinuities to those perceptions offered by pupils through the emergence of data. By using participant observation in the Main Study (following a small

group of friends from each Year group around the school at break-times and in lessons), I could observe the girls in other naturalistic situations and to encounter a wider range of behaviours and interactions, and to be able to see examples of what was discussed in the focus groups actually occurring.

As Morgan states:

'The goal is to use each method so that it contributes something unique to the researchers' understanding of the phenomenon under study' (1997, p. 3).

The phenomenon here is to understand group friendships during break-times and lessons within the context of the school environment, and each of the research methods will complement one another and will allow in-depth data to be collected.

General comments

All the groups were very accommodating along with the teachers. I had asked the head if she would remind the teachers during her early morning meeting that I may end up in their classes over the following three weeks, if they taught a Year 7, 8 or 9 on a Tuesday or Friday. I also introduced myself to the teacher every time my group had a new lesson with them, just to check if it was still O.K. for me to come and sit in with my group. If any of the teachers had objected (which they

didn't) then I would not have gone into the lesson. I was always conscious of trying to be reflexive and being as neutral as possible, but even with my best intentions openly expressed, I was also aware that by using transcripts and relaying what was said in the research, I was still speaking for others and thus revealing issues of power. As such, I was aware that in education this is what happens and it is full of people speaking for others, and I wanted to represent these voices as honestly and equally as I could.

The teachers seemed to view me in different ways; as a friend, in a professional capacity as a teacher, as a researcher (respect given to my position) and someone impartial (as I no longer work in the school but still understand the politics that go on) to confide in and offer a listening ear – this happened both during my observations and as the groups left a lesson. Similarly, I found that my openness also worked in relation to what I wrote. I learned to offer my notes to teachers and my groups and found that if I did so, trust was very forthcoming and rarely did they ask to see them again.

The only amendment to my shadowing occurred on a Friday afternoon, when a whole school Mass had been arranged at fairly short notice (I was, at the time, with year 8). I was saved from making a decision as to the most appropriate course of action to take (finish observing early, take part in the Mass as it reinforced the ethos of the school) by a teacher who I knew in a professional manner, who almost forbade me to sit in the teachers staffroom when there was

room in the hall. The teacher assisted me into the hall and even pointed to a seat for me. At the end of the Mass I was able to talk to my group and wish them a good week-end.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a rationale for using an interpretive framework and suggests that this framework is the most appropriate (or naturally best-fit) for exploring all three of my research aims. Moreover, my ontology and epistemology reflect and mirrors many of the main assumptions of the interpretive framework and, as such, directly lends support towards my choice of research aims. It seems imperative (due to my focus on behaviour being situated in context, and the notion of interconnectedness between contexts) that similarly my epistemology, ontology and methodology should also complement each other and the interpretive framework allows me to do this naturally. It allows me to explore the experience of contexts and to begin to uncover the world of friendships within my school.

The three main research methods selected to address my three research aims were critically discussed, namely; focus groups, one-to-one semi-structured interviews and participant observation, along with how they complement each other. The data collection for the Main Study was described (and showed how the themes that emerged in the Pilot Study provided topics for the focus groups and one-to-interviews in the Main Study). The data emerging from the

three methods was then transcribed and analysed, which allowed one overriding theme of 'secret worlds' to emerge. The analysis will be presented and discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

NARRATIVE AND ANALYSIS

The aim of this chapter is to provide a detailed account of how I analysed and interpreted the data from the Main Study. The tapes from the focus groups and one-to-one interviews were transcribed along with the fieldnotes taken during the participant observations. I begin this chapter with a justification for the use of presenting a narrative in my analysis that I believe stories the process of friendships. I have included this as it summarises my whole research and presents a more holistic picture of friendships and not just unrelated parts. As my focus is on the socio-cultural approach and the interconnectedness of contexts, along with an interpretive framework, it seemed imperative for me to include a narrative that allows the reader to understand the importance of friendships across the pupil's whole day at school, and not just only take parts of this out of context to analyse and explore my three research aims. As Scott and Usher (1996) state:

'As well as being perspectival and partial, interpretations are always circular. The interpretation of part of something depends on interpreting the whole, but interpreting the whole depends on an interpretation of the parts' (p. 19).

The second section of the analysis explores the three research aims in more detail and provides examples from the transcript of themes that have emerged from the data. The themes reflect the importance of friendships and try to explain, through the use of the socio-cultural approach, how activities within and between friendship groups can and do affect learning within the class-room in some cases.

Situating the research and 'storying' friendships.

Narratives:

Tovey and Manson (2004) discuss the usefulness of using storytelling as an analytical and interpretive tool in qualitative research. They discuss the issue for some researchers of the 'truth' of narratives and their authenticity in terms of reality and the closeness of interpretations to reality. As Wells (2010) suggests:

'The reality each one of us inhabits is to a very large extent a distillation of the stories that we have shared...in our perceptual attempts to understand the world in which we live and our experiences in it' (p. 216).

By providing the audience with a narrative, I hope to provide a more holistic view of peer groups and their friendships that will enlighten

and provide a context for the analysis: this aligns closely to Clough's (2002) concern that the focal point of the narrative is not necessarily how a story will be constructed, but what the point of the story is: the stories are a result of the data collected and my ontological assumption that participation and practice underpin identity and learning remains a focus in relation to friendships.

How the narrative was constructed

To construct the narrative meant copious re-readings of the data to familiarise myself with all aspects of the research and, although I was not aware of any emotional content when conducting the research, (as I was busy at the time recording anything I could), I found myself when typing up the research, reflecting on some events with emotion and realised that when recording I must have (more than likely) expressed some emotional reactions. There was an awareness that these memories were constructed in the context of my research: the narrative must be read with this in mind and may be constructed differently if it was rewritten now.

Willig (2010) suggests that:

'Through constructing narratives about their lives, people make connections between events and interpret them...Telling a story about what has happened to us allows us to give coherence and

meaning to what may otherwise feel like a confusing and disorganized interpretation of a sequence of events...researching narratives can tell us something about the ways in which people construct meaning in (and for) their lives' (p. 133).

It is important to provide an holistic view of my research, as my ontology is underpinned by the socio-cultural approach and the idea of Communities of Practice, and possible interconnections between contexts with the notion of distributed selves.

Willig (2010) acknowledges that there is no set way of approaching a narrative, but what is vital is that the narrative is clear and systematic, which I have tried to do and have kept my research aims in mind throughout. To construct the narrative, I tried to select, from the transcript, information that would relay a balanced and informative story of my research. I wanted to present details that were relevant to peer groups, as this was the focus of my research, but at the same time provide a clear and flowing narrative. I wanted to give the reader a picture of the whole research, so that they could then understand from where the examples of situations used in the thematic analysis had arisen.

The narrative

The school chosen was a Roman Catholic, mixed primary and up to September 2009 was all girls secondary. It is now co-educational with all of the boys in years 7, 8 and the sixth form. In the secondary school, there are only about three-hundred and thirty girls in total and about 25 boys (including sixth form). The school population is predominantly middle-class and the school itself has a good local reputation (including good examination results) and morale amongst staff and pupils is also perceived as being good. There are few discipline problems throughout the school and the school have a unique uniform. The school motto is: 'To inspire and to be inspired' and the school crest (depicted amongst other places) on some of the clothes and in the hall above the stage there is writing in Latin that translates to something like 'gentle but brave' or 'sweet but strong'.

There is a strong and supportive P.T.A. (and Governing body), who raise money for the school on regular occasions (including a Christmas extravaganza where children bring in prizes as a swap to wear home clothes and the prizes are won in a gigantic tombola at the end of a fun evening. The prizes filled the stage and some were amazing). Other events included: barbeques, summer fairs, a new spring ball (to enhance the I.T. suite) and much more.

The entrance to the school is off a busy main road, but once you turn into the school you are met with a drive-way that is quite picturesque and peaceful, with trees aligning a small forest-like area on the left

and a field of sheep to the right. At the end of the short drive-way is a roundabout where squirrels are often seen playing.

The school itself is an old building and looks impressive (like an old house or mansion). On the ground floor is the reception (including rooms for administration and the school office), the library, hall, changing rooms, kitchen and canteen, staff work-room, one old unisex staff toilet (with old-fashioned fittings and basins, but up-to-date cleaning products), a business studies room, the Chapel and the head teacher's room plus a cupboard under the stairs (which pupils seem inquisitive about and do not seem to know what is in it).

On the first floor, class-rooms include: Maths room, I.T. specialist support, toilet (1), office, staff room, Key stage 3 co-ordinator's office, Head of Faculties and language office (shared) and the boarding house. The boarding house consists of dormitories, bathrooms and two lounges, (Derwen and Dyffryn). Although the lounges were used on some days for music lessons etc. the rooms were always locked in the days.

Outside of the school there are numerous mobiles: Welsh and History (including Sociology), primary staff-room, tutorial 1 (special needs) and 2 (Spanish, drama), French, English, primary school building (nursery, reception, Year 1, 2, 3 and 4, with an enclosed sand-pit, play area and pencil fence), the studio (music and dance), art mobile, D.T. mobile, Home Economics mobile, year 5 and 6

mobiles, secondary Geography mobile, and Maths, R.E., the I.T. mobile and two Cadet mobiles (behind the I.T. and R.E. mobiles), over-looking the small field and an 80 metres running track (one mobile was for equipment and one is an office or meeting place), a sixth-form common room, the D.O.L. (Dennis Oliver Laboratory, named after the person who funded this newest room), which includes biology, chemistry, physics and general science and the lockers for the pupils. The play-ground has a full-sized netball court on it, some drawn on fun activities (such as Chess and hopscotch) and a few seats around it. There is also a field at the front of the cadet mobiles that is split into two small halves; the first half over-looking the cadet mobiles fits a small rounder's pitch in its boundaries (plus sheep fields and a stile to access them if the balls go over) and links to the second grass area via a bank, where wooden picnic tables are situated (some pupils use these to eat their lunches on and others do homework on them). Adjacent to these tables is a small enclosed area that is nicknamed 'the secret garden' by many pupils which is enclosed with a low-level fence made to look like large coloured pencils (the same as surround the infant play area).

The school also owns the land opposite the school drive-way and most of the Physical Education lessons are done there (unless the weather is bad, when pupils go into the hall).

The school day consists of a twenty-five minute registration (at 8.50) followed by two one hour slots before break, (which lasts 15 minutes)

then another hour slot before dinner. The afternoon (after 5 minutes registration) has no break-time and has two, one hour sessions before the end of school (which finishes at 3.35). The school buses leave at 3.45. Some pupils get the 'service' bus (not transport provided by the school) at the end of the drive-way on the opposite side of the road, which now stops at 3.50 outside the school (rather than the pupils having to walk across a couple of major roads and cross over roundabouts, like they had to do the previous year). To help home-times and the beginning of school to run as smoothly and safely as possible, some staff are given duties to do (bus duties, school gates duties) and they wear luminous jackets and stand in their designated areas, usually talking to each other. The teachers on duty outside the gates check that cars only turn left out of the gates and watch as the pupils cross the busy road to get to the bus-stop opposite. The teachers who are stood by the buses help to get pupils onto them, so they can get away on time.

There were many opportunities within the school day to explore friendships and interact, the more obvious examples included: during travel in on the buses (to and from school), pre-registration, and break-time/lunch-times. Many also explored friendships during lessons and continued their links with each other whilst at home.

The general consensus, however, within groups was that teachers did not understand the true importance of friendships for pupils and the negative implications both on identity and learning of splitting

groups up. From the pupils' perspective, many of the older pupils felt that it was detrimental to their learning as one pupil said 'They're like, just sit there, it won't affect you, but it does' and her friend replied with 'I work better sitting with my friends, I hate sitting away from my friends' which complemented another group with the same opinions who said that 'they hated seating plans, they're the worst thing ever...sitting with your friends you learn more 'cos I don't feel stupid.'

From the teacher's perspective, when interviewed, in theory they all accepted, and were personally aware of, the true importance of friendship to pupils and especially the pedagogical impact of friendships on Key Stage pupils, however, some still used seating plans and concentrated on the negative aspects of sitting with friends. The Key Stage Three co-ordinator commented that ...'some pupils underachieve as it's not seen to be cool to do well in their group with certain attitudes.' Another teacher (T2) again viewed friendships as really important and understood the pupils' needs to feel secure and safe, which also supported T4 and T7 (who realised friends provided someone to 'hang around with' and help to get through the day) and T5 who suggested that friends offered 'a sense of belonging'. One teacher (T6) actually suggested that 'school' has a role to help friendships develop, and that it was alright to have friends to support within the class-room in a positive way, but then suggested that unfortunately, in practice 'they' (possibly implying 'teachers' as a whole) did not like friendship groups staying together and directly intervened to split them up.

Some teachers also seem misinformed about certain issues relating to friendship, for example, one teacher (T3) seemed to think that pupils were only interested in their own group. The research revealed that many groups in the school not only had labels (or nick-names) within their own groups, but also labelled other groups. Also, many of the labels they applied were consistent with other groups and in some cases were consistent across the years. Group names included the 'randoms' (where a Year 7 used labels that were personal to them in an amusing light-hearted manner, such as 'lollible', 'bananable'). This specific group came together because they had come from a variety of schools and were not from the schools infant/juniors. Another example was 'The Ace Gang' (a year 9 group basing their name around a recent film called Angus Thongs and Perfect Snogging which depicted that name for their gang). This media influence was evident when talking to a Year 9 group: when they were in Year 7 as they arranged their group into cliques as they entered the room (unbeknown to the teacher). Their arrangements were based on 'The Bratz' movie. Other groups recalled the film 'Mean Girls' which showed how powerful some girls' groups could be within a school. The Queen Bee was the label given to the leader of the most fashionable clique (nick-named the 'Plastics') and it was the story of how one home-educated girl found her place amongst many sub-cultures (groups) found within her new public high-school. As she'd been brought up in an African bush, she'd have been expected to have adapted well to anywhere, but 'survival of the fittest'

surprisingly to her seemed to apply just as well in the school as it had in the bush, in other words, across contexts and the dominant clique was renowned to be 'mean' to individuals and groups: this label of 'meanness' was applied to one Year 9 group in the present study who were labelled 'the dark horse' and reflected qualities such as meanness, being horrible, which lead to some pupils not liking this particular year. A teacher (T1) even supported this fact by stating that the three pupils were not liked across the school but did not mention any similar labels.

It was also noticeable that different groups had different reputations that pupils (and some staff) were aware of, and that being a member of a group seemed to influence the pupil's behaviour in school. One pupil (Group B) for example, was also a member of two groups and had to split herself between groups and acknowledged that she acted differently within each group, as the second group was more 'popular' (named 'cooleo' by the others), but she stated she could be more relaxed and laid back with this group.

Another year 9 group (G) accused Group H of being 'Chavs', (which they actually admitted to quite happily and with pride, but clarified their definitions). Group (H) did actually label themselves as 'Chavs' (as they acknowledge this in interviews) and defined their identity as: trackies (Burberry stuff), posh, but casual designer labels and reinforced Burberry jeans. Group (H) saw themselves as a Chav mix including Lacoste, Nike and McKenzie and jokingly labelled (G) as

'snobs' or 'popular' as everyone liked them. They also classed Group (G) as different to them and wearing 'proper' and posh stuff, but then qualified their observations by saying... 'it's not really posh, just different to what they wear'. They wore designer labels but did not go out in Chanel or little bangles and all the 'fancy stuff'. Again, their identity seemed to be formed by what they are not, compared to other groups: this was supported by the notion that they were well known but not for good stuff and group G were known for more good stuff than them. Group G suggested 'Chavs' go round in a circle, wear 'Burberry', try to act hard, do not care about other people's feelings... 'their hair is a giveaway', they find it 'cool' to hang around street corners, do different activities out of school than them, bunk and think it is clever, think they're amazing in school and 'hard' (but out of school they're 'scared' of them). This group even offered a police definition that referred to arguing and violence along with a special way of talking... ('Alright babe, how are yer?', seemingly directed at Group H). There did seem to be some competition between these groups for attention. Also, the group suggested that the other group found boys of their age are... 'not developed enough for them'. Most of their associated labels were negative traits and that the group were not real 'Chavs'... 'just think they are', but do state that other pupils do see them as 'Chavs' and therefore did not wish to be associated with them.

These particular two groups provided direct evidence of conflict (and even possible jealousy) between groups, but again their feelings

towards the other groups was only discussed in focus groups and not obvious in the class-room observations as I predominantly only observed a group from the other half of the year. However, in the Maths lesson when I followed my group, some of the other group were there and one of the main groups interviewed was working with one member of the other focus group. They were talking to each other and their answers were used as examples for the other members of the class: however, she did at one point in time try to put a pencil to the pupil's mouth to try to stop her talking when she wanted to answer a question.

Other accepted labels applied to a couple of groups were those of 'EMOS', 'runaway kids' and 'wannabees'. Group 9H saw EMO's as... 'loud and lots of boy influence, scary dull people who want to kill themselves'. The label of 'self-harmers' was attached to this group and some pupils seem afraid to be associated with this group. Group C were labelled differently, as the 'runaway kids' by most groups in the years, based on their actual actions of running away from school and being found at a railway station and being brought back to school. This was to do with one of the girls wanting to visit their biological mother. Also the 'wannabees' were widely known and easily identified as pupils who copy the more popular pupils (in terms of hair cut or clothes etc.), in other words, do not have their own unique identity. Other labels applied included 'Geeks' and 'Goths'. It seems that these labels show how social school is and how identity is formed in multiple ways.

In relation to group arguments, the majority of pupils who fell out stated that it affected their concentration in the next lesson or lessons, some even counted down the minutes to break-times so they could sort it out. Group (B) suggested that in this situation it was annoying if they were made to share books because the pupil would slap them down and not be helpful. Also, many pupils made it evident that the teacher was not aware of these arguments and also said that often there was no point in telling the teacher, as if the argument was small, the group themselves would sort it in their own time. (13B) 'You have to sit next to each other and then you have to share, and it's really annoying 'cos they slap the book up...it's really annoying because if...@ Does the teacher realise? (13B) No!'

Arguments for some of year 9's seemed to escalate out of routine events in lessons. For example, a year 9 group said that a joke about music likes turned into an argument. In Science, a Year 9 group were not allowed to talk, and fell out by writing notes that were interpreted the wrong way and this escalated into the next Geography lesson, and the only way the teacher found out about it was when it became vocal and they screamed at each other. Afterwards, the group did reflect on this episode and many regretted it.

Many groups stated that arguments tended to be brought into the lesson and evidence showed that they often continued from break-time or even home. Within one year 9 class there was friction

between two groups and this was relayed in interviews when one group explained that before a registration a member of Group (H) allegedly 'punched' a member of Group (G) (something to do with an incident of texting outside of school), but in school this issue was denied and believed that the threat at home was put on, so one member of (G) gave 'a little' warning to group (H).

Group G believed that if an argument was started in class it should stay there, and gave an example of such an event in their P.E. lesson that erupted en route to the changing rooms and then was left there. Also, if there is a disagreement within the class the Year 9's (pupils) suggested that the whole class take sides and join in and become protective of one or the other side.

Many teachers were aware of the impact of arguments on learning or the disruption it could cause, but did not mention the examples that the groups talked about. T1 reported how an argument in school (wasting fifteen minutes of lesson time to sort out) could have escalated from what seems like a minor incident outside of school, of which teachers are originally unaware. This particular argument was in a Year 8 group where the argument erupted at lunch-time and carried on into lessons. The argument was about a blusher bought in a local shop and one of the members had got the same one.

Another teacher (T2) talked about how fall-outs brought from a previous lesson could also affect not just the pupils but the teacher

as well, with her example of the behaviour of a Year 9 group (G), who supported this point by their behaviour in front of an external inspector. The majority of the class were apparently on task, but the inspector was sitting close to Group (G) (at the back) and observing their behaviour. They were bickering about something brought into the lesson which had erupted during lunch and had absolutely nothing to do with the lesson. The teacher had commented to me that the group had lost their 'peacemaker/mediator' (which in interview one member seemed glad she had left) and without that, with the added catalyst of one in the group seemingly enjoying stirring the issues, it did not seem to take much to unsteady the group.

Other teachers recounted incidents from personal life interfering with school lessons: T3 decided to sort out a problem between two pupils in a group (the same group as the previous incident) where one came into her lesson in tears and the other looked ready to explode leading to 'shutting off' and aggressive behaviour. She took them aside and it was to do with one of them commenting on her relationship with the other pupil's boyfriend. This teacher also recognised that some teachers were determined that nothing should continue into their lessons especially issues from home.

T5 believed that pupils liked the idea of learning in the class-room and break-time being kept separate. This was also similar to another teacher's viewpoint (T6) who again was aware of 'unpleasantness'

that could erupt within groups, but did not see the class-room as 'the forum' for such events. Although T6 offered to talk sometimes, he believed they did not want to. He also acknowledged that some pupils had tears in their eyes from break-time or lunch-time. However, he did not want to draw attention to these, so mostly ignored them. If the girls were openly upset, he would send them to the office with a friend to sort out the problem. T7 also suggested that teachers should not interfere as the 'outside' had nothing to do with learning, and distinguished between this (their social) and their learning in the class-room. He still expected them to...'engage in their learning.'

However, T2 suggested that, to teachers, squabbles could seem minor but to pupils they may seem like a 'life and death' situation, and tended to deal with the arguments within the lesson but sometimes wished that she had not tried. She stated that there was a problem if people separated these arguments and expected the pupils to leave them outside of the class-room, because she knew that some of the backgrounds of the girls followed them to school and they worried about various things happening at home. Pupils, according to T2, never 'switched-off', and it was important to have supportive friendships within school to help them through any problems that may follow them from home.

There seemed to be a mixed view amongst teachers as to the impact on identity of arguments amongst pupils, and the belief as to whether

or not pupils could naturally switch-off when jumping from break-times to lessons. As seen previously, some teachers expected and even demanded this ability.

During break-time on good weather days, the majority of pupils could be seen rushing out of their class-rooms to meet up with their friendship groups at designated areas of the school grounds. It was a hive of activity and much of the secret world of friendship could be seen to operate here.

The children interviewed gave consistent and accurate descriptions of where groups 'hung around'. The social space was regarded as being 'owned' by certain groups, and the pupils were fully aware of this. However, some teachers had no idea about groups' whereabouts and commented that they had no contact with pupils at break-time. The Key Stage Three coordinator (T1) was aware of certain groups, as she allocated herself a day to try to find where pupils were in case she needed to locate them.

When interviewing the teachers it was evident that not very much was known about the pupils' behaviour or location, with a gap in many teachers' knowledge. T3 thought that most pupils stayed in their form-rooms. T4 knew about a year 11 groups' whereabouts (outside the hall) and that some played near the log on the roundabout and in the forest. T7 only knew who was on the play-ground outside his room and nothing else regarding where pupils

met. T3 acknowledged that some pupils were in their forms but stated that when break-duty was done... 'you don't speak' and other teachers have not even done a duty. Teachers not on duty would usually be sat in their teaching rooms or up in the staff-room away from the pupils, whereas a teacher on duty would be stood in the play-ground or move around the school grounds in case any pupil approached them for help.

Many areas of the school were occupied by groups of pupils during break-time and lunch-time and many remained secret to the teachers and of much importance to the pupils. For example, my observation group in Year 9 'owned' an old tree on the small field at the edge of the school boundaries. Next to the tree was an open field with sheep in it (often a sheep would escape and join a couple of regular guinea fowls on the school play-ground).

The tree was at first glance an ordinary tree, old but ordinary. Due to it's age, it was tall and had numerous thick branches that filled most of the space above the trunk. This tree meant so much to my group as it held memories of friendship and represented 'social fun' for these girls. They carried out rituals around the tree, such as burying a ruler and a purse with all the group's signatures on a piece of paper in it, taking pictures and phone videos and inscribing their names onto the wood to mark it as theirs. The tree was nick-named 'hicleout', originally 'hideout' to do with the Ace Gang on a recent film, but misread by a group member. The tree also provided

entertainment for the group. One day the group were climbing it and T1 came towards them, so part of the group got stuck up the tree whilst the others got down in time to avoid being caught by the teacher. The girls up the tree were convinced that the teacher noticed as they were giggling and the leaves were moving as they hung on, but they were not reprimanded.

The year seven group 'owned' part of the roundabout, but shared it with another group with an imaginary line across it. Year 7 also 'owned' the woods and the football pitch on which some selected year 8's played football with year 7's. One year 9 group were in the shower area (changing room), year 10 were in the locker rooms, some by the little garden, some at the top of the hill, whilst Year 11s sat on the steps by the Maths room, steps by the Welsh room and outside the hall, the sixth form sat in the library. Other pupils could be found in their form rooms or taking walks around the school grounds. Pupils tended to play their made-up games (a year 7 played Twig-factor with Ant and Dec, a year 8 played a question game of who knew who best and Mr. and Mrs as well as drama games), others played football and others listened to their iPods or chatted about personal and social aspects of their lives.

Similarly another associated aspect of group behaviour was their protective nature. Some groups actually warned members of other groups off. Group (H) prevented others joining their group by: not welcoming them by avoiding talking to them, not looking at them and

implied... 'they just know'... 'they don't ever ask'... 'this is my territory, not yours.' Other groups will glare at 'outsiders', however, some groups were kind to members of other groups and welcomed them into their group. When another group (in Year 11) tried to use the 'hicleout' tree as their base, they were confronted after school by the Year 9 group members and warned off. Break-times are definitely a haven of secret activity.

Within the class-rooms (in the lessons) the groups that were observed showed a variety of behaviours depending on the lesson and the teacher, but the influence of friends was highly noticeable. The amount of non-verbal communication present was extensive. This occurred in the form of: signalling across the class and sending notes, including making codes. The common reason for these communications seems to be related to boredom... 'if bored, it just makes the lesson more interesting'. Boredom was linked to writing too much off the board, the teacher talking on and on, having to work in silence, a monotone voice and lack of exciting activities. Some pupils see note writing as a skill or a game and admit to never being caught. The notes express: boredom, say 'sorry'... 'I'm upset because', make suggestions for the week-end, and ask fun questions, such as their favourite celebrities, and were often hidden under books. One group (E) actually said they fell out because of a note they started to write because they were bored where one comment on the note was to... 'say something you don't like about

me'. By the end of the Science lesson they were not talking to each other.

Therefore, the act of passing notes can sometimes spiral out of control and my observations revealed that notes were often passed when the pupils were supposed to be learning. This also happened within an English lesson (which I observed) where a note was confiscated from a pair of pupils at the front of the class and it was not very nice about another member of the class. The girls were seen during and after the lesson and the emotional consequences of their actions (in terms of the other pupil reading the note) were explained to them.

It was observed that some teachers specifically arranged their classes to suit their subject or their preferences. Teacher (T1) used rows and only used group work for a couple of minutes, if that, and she usually taught in her form room which many pupils liked. A number of teachers including T1, T2 and T3 disliked the D.O.L. (science lab with hexagonal benches seating about six pupils) as many pupils had their backs to the teacher and the notion that the pupils are 'not with you', but saw the interactive whiteboard as an asset. It seemed that teachers wanted to control the social environment by manipulating pupil interaction.

Teacher (T5) allowed pupils to sit where they wanted (like T7 who said he always got through the work he wanted to) as long as they

were behaving and had half the desks in pairs and half in groups as the groups clustered in abilities and this sometimes prevented them bringing each other on, so the flexibility of the seating meant the teacher could move pupils around if learning was being affected. This was in contrast to T6 who had a seating plan (boy-girl to start with) and said this was to do with class-room management so only History was talked about. There were obviously different approaches in operation when arranging the class-room.

The teachers also varied their planning, some around specific groups (T2), others around the class there. One teacher (T2) pointed out that in one class... 'there were eight potential fireworks' and if the balance in the class was destroyed... the delicate fall.' Having strategically planned (and found that to be ineffective due to the influence of groups), she pulled names out of the hat. The teacher acknowledged that friendships were an important... 'dynamic of the class' and these dynamics changed quickly and seemed fluid. For example, even if only one pupil was removed or absent, the whole dynamics can change. Teacher (T3's) lessons were tightly controlled from the beginning to the end. T4 allowed a free choice of seating as she did not want to put pupils out of their comfort zone as she acknowledges how important friends are in their life. Teacher (T7) acknowledged that lessons can vary depending on amongst other things... 'how they get on with their friends' and suggests this has... 'a direct influence on teaching:' this teacher used group friendships for... 'healthy rivalry' between groups to increase marks. Also discussed

by this teacher was the positive effects of 'setting', (and by T8) as his belief was that mixed ability groups achieved worse marks because, although the lower ability can be brought on by the more able, it is the more able that would not be achieving as many A*'s as they could if the classes were set for Science... 'in a perfect world...low ability would be brought on by their peers and, for example, the teachers would stretch the more able to achieve...but that doesn't really happen.'

Another area for discussion that emerged from the data was the notion of technological advances, and how many pupil's stayed in touch at home nowadays. Also, fall-outs could be brought back into school (even if they did not originate there). Teacher (T1) accepted an overlap when groups quarrelled, in that it started at home on MSN and was often brought back into school and believed... 'it's not a school issue', and also believed that sometimes issues also followed them home, and commented on how times had changed and how safe we were years ago without this particular technology. However, this teacher admitted that in school, there had been issues with mobile phones where photos had been taken of a pupil during break-time and put on their home computer for everyone to access, but with comments relating to how stupid the girl looked.

What also emerged was that some pupils would try to use their phones in lessons and even try to contact each other. One teacher (T4) suspected that one pupil (42H) had her phone up her sleeve and

used it to talk to her friend about an incident she had been reprimanded for by the Key-stage co-ordinator, just after she had returned back to class: this hiding place was actually confirmed by the pupil herself during my interview with her group and she said that if a teacher did not let them talk, they texted on one phone and passed it between the group. (Other places included up the girls' shorts and in their school bags): the rest of the teachers shared some of this apprehension about technology and had similar concerns of how pupils could leave school as friends and come back as enemies (T2, T3) and T7 believed... 'home-life should be regulated by parents.'

Whilst I was at the school, two serious incidents occurred which were a direct consequence of technology. The first involved two friends using their computer to arrange to run away from school the next day (to visit one of the pupil's biological mother, who she did not presently live with as discussed earlier). However, the more serious incident involved one of the two pupils who set up a web-site that had over 100 names on it, titled 'I hate T1'. The teacher found out because some girls told her. The pupil realised the school knew about the site and ran away, (but was found safely) and everyone else with their names on the site frantically tried to remove their names before the deputy-head managed to get a print out of names. Six names remained (one of them was in my observation group). The punishment was a head's detention and to wear school uniform on the non-uniform day that Friday.

The pupil in my observation group did arrive with uniform on (although a little later than usual). Within the Geography lesson (whilst watching a video) she took her tie off and put it on the top of her leg. A friend then took it off her and fiddled with it, before it was given back and put on again. (The teacher did not seem to notice). What was noticeable however was the fact that this pupil was given a large hoodie by her friend to wear during break-time over her school uniform, which she gladly accepted rather than be seen in school uniform during break-time, and seemed to collude to resist authority which formed part of the pupil identity. Similarly, some pupils took every opportunity to undo their top button on normal school days and only did it up again when requested by certain teachers (such as T5) or on the appearance of the KS3 co-ordinator (T1). In fact, certain pupils seemed to act as guards and informers to the rest of the class and advise the pupils as to when T1 was about to visit their lessons with a particular message or problem.

Section summary

It can be seen, therefore, that by storying friendships in this narrative, various issues have emerged from this research, relating to how important peer groups are to individuals and the group identity to which some adhere. Also, some groups own 'space' around the school and friendships seemed to help some pupils to get through the school day, and for others, the evening too (until they meet again

the next day). The narrative helped to inform the thematic analysis by creating an holistic view of the research, which assisted the emergence of the main theme and its related issues.

It has become evident from all this research that often break-time and lessons or even school and home still have an important connection to, and form part of, the pupils' identity, and much of what is experienced by pupils is often secret to many teachers or only partially available to a few selected teachers. This narrative reveals that there are discontinuities in relation to how pupils and teachers view the importance of friendship, and these are revealed by the actions that are carried out, reflecting Research aim 1 (to explore continuities and discontinuities in understandings between Key Stage 3 teachers and pupils in relation to the importance and functions of peer groups during break-times and within the class-room). The narrative has also highlighted some of the problems pupils encounter within the school environment when they have to make decisions between their personal and social aspects of their lives, reflecting research aim 2 (to explore pupils' negotiations of social relationships in the school environment). Similarly, it has revealed the necessity to consider a socio-cultural approach to exploring friendships in relation to learning as the pupils (and teachers) in the narrative seem to have been affected by many external influences within their school day.

The following section will describe the themes that emerged during the thematic analysis of the data in the transcript and allow an exploration of all three of the research aims. As such, there is no set protocol for the qualitative analysis of transcribed data from focus groups. However, Denzin and Lincoln (2008) suggest qualitative researchers read and re-read their transcriptions and:

‘Try to pin down their key themes and, thereby, to draw a picture of the presuppositions and meanings that constitute the cultural world of which the textual material is a specimen.’ (p. 352).

With this advice in mind, I have adopted what Krueger and Casey (2000) term the ‘Long-Table Approach’ to qualitative analysis, (which involves spreading the transcript out across a long table, cutting out quotes and placing them into categories on separate headed sheets of paper). Apart from fitting in with what Denzin and Lincoln (2008) suggest, this approach has been specifically suggested for use with focus groups.

Once the data had been transcribed, with line numbers to help locate quotes for later on, (see Appendix 2), the ‘Long-Table Approach’ began. The transcript was spread out and remained undisturbed for the whole of the analysis. As themes emerged from reading and re-reading the transcript (and aided by the narrative), the quotes representing the emerging themes were cut-out and placed on an A3

piece of paper under its appropriate category heading. At first, the themes that emerged were broad, but after re-reading the data meticulously over and over again and in more depth, it became apparent that there was one main overriding theme that incorporated all of the emerging issues. The theme was that of 'the secret world of friendships.'

THE SECRET WORLD OF FRIENDSHIPS.

The emerging theme of 'the secret world of friendships' reveals a number of problems for both pupils and teachers alike. Many of the problems can be associated with the present structure of schools. More generally, these issues seem to originate from the dominant and underlying ontological and epistemological discourse surrounding the values attached to the wider education system. All of these values represent how 'truth' is viewed in our schools, which is predominantly based on the traditional transmission model of learning, where power is unequally distributed in favour of the teacher. The pupil is seen as an empty vessel who listens to the teacher and is filled with expert knowledge which is transmitted in that specific context (the class-room) and at that specific time-slot (the lesson).

After each problem is identified through the emerging data below, I will try to offer a possible suggestion of how socio-cultural theory can

be usefully applied to help to understand the issue. Socio-cultural theory firmly situates individuals in their contexts as well as acknowledging (through the work of Bronfenbrenner) the interconnectedness of systems within an individual's life.

All of the issues that have emerged are embedded within the overriding theme of 'the secret world of friendships' and are presented as sub-sections in the following analysis. The list of sub-sections are as follows:

- The construction of break-time by teachers
- The construction of break-time by pupils
- Ownership of physical space during break-time
- Ownership of physical space within the class-room
- The other half of the year
- Labelling and self-differentiation
- Protection of the group
- Seating arrangements
- Distributed selves
- Over-spill of arguments
- Acts of resistance
- Technology

Each of the above will be introduced more fully in the following analysis, and relevant emerging data will be presented to explore the

secrecy of friendships and any related implications in relation to the three research aims.

The socio-cultural suggestions made (in relation to Research aim 3) help to explore any emerging issues (many of which relate directly to the present structure of schools) and allow the true importance of friendships to be understood and valued (Research aim 1), whilst being able to explain why the present structure of schools helps to promote (and not eliminate) discontinuities of 'this importance' between pupils and teachers.

Moreover, the socio-cultural approach allows for, and expects, many negotiations of identity to emerge through the data (both within and between contexts). The notion of distributed selves becomes evident and real. (Research aim 2).

The examples below of talk and observation reveal just how secret friendships are (in all of the sub-sections). The data shows that teachers do not have much contact with pupils at break-time and some teachers do not even do break-time duty. The secrecy of the pupils' social world must undermine collaboration with teachers and so, in turn, this may undermine the emergence of a zone of proximal development and, ultimately, learning.

The construction of break-time by teachers

As the title of the thesis sets out to explore the effect that peer group activities during break-time has on subsequent lessons (and hence pedagogy), it seems natural to consider how break-time is constructed by both teachers and pupils. It is also necessary to find out what teachers know about friendships during break-time in terms of their function, including what pupils do and where they congregate. The following data reveal how many friendship activities during break-time still remain opaque to many teachers (due to lack of contact) and emphasises the true secrecy of friendships.

880– 898

® Do pupils learn skills in break-times and if so, are they different or complementary from those learned in lessons?

(T3) Once again you don't have that much contact with them at break-time; it's very difficult to answer that one. Every time I see them around, they tend to be far more relaxed. They do have time to be themselves, they can.

® So basically, do you see that there's a gap in teachers' knowledge of pupils' break-time behaviour in secondary school?

(T3) Yes.

® We don't know?

(T3) No, no absolutely. There is break-time duty but you don't actually speak to them during that time and I've never done break-time duty, actually.

Similarly the reply from another teacher (whose class-room was positioned in the middle of the play-ground) when asked whether he realised what KS3 pupils did at break-times, was:

2119 – 2129

(T7) No, I've only just come back to KS3...

® Are you aware of what happens with your form at break-times?

(T7) They play football outside here.

® Are you aware when you walk around the school in break-times of any other groups?

(T7) No, no.

In contrast, however, both teacher 1 and teacher 4 showed some awareness of where some groups 'hung out' at break-times. Teacher 1, as key-stage co-ordinator, had a day to try to locate students in case they were needed, and teacher 4 looked through the staff-room

window and observed some groups regularly meeting around the front of the building. However, through interviews and observation, it became evident that there was a general lack of knowledge by many teachers as to the whereabouts or activities of many friendship groups during break-time, which may be indicative of either disinterest or the geographical structure of the school or a deliberate policy.

The way that break-time is structurally organised seems to construct difference – time away from each other, because pupils and teachers are on separate teams. But also, interestingly, teacher 3 above, talks about students ‘being themselves’ at break-times, which could imply that she does not believe that they can be themselves in the class-room. However, the mere acknowledgement of ‘being themselves’ implies that the teacher seems to believe that they are capable of different identities during break-times and class-times. This would certainly be in-line with the Communities of Practice literature, where one would predict different participatory acts in different Communities of Practice. It could also be seen that the teacher is implying that there are different demands put on participation in both these contexts and that these are played out in the class-room, and as a result of this, the more ‘formal self’ is constructed. The ability to behave appropriately in both these contexts would be useful for the pupil to master, and an understanding of how this is done by the pupils would inform teachers of a very opaque area of research.

Due to the gap in knowledge about research on the meaning of break-time for pupils, it seems imperative to see how the pupils' voices constructed break-time. The following data reveals just how break-times are constructed by the pupils and, following on from that, how the notion of 'ownership' emerged as an important aspect of break-time.

The following extracts show that during break-times pupils have different rules than in the class-room regarding what is regarded as acceptable behaviour and expect teachers to accept these. However, as can be seen below, there is often a difference of opinion in what is allowed or not.

The Construction of break-time by pupils

7589 – 7609

® Do you own break-time?

(40G) No.

(41G) We own our own break-time.

(37G) We earn it don't we?

® Does your hierarchy change at break-times?

(37G) If a teacher went 'be quiet' at break-time, I'd just go, it's break-time, we're allowed to talk.

® Are you level at break-time?

(38G) No, they're still higher than you, but we have different rules, like the iPod thing, but we are allowed to.....

(39G) When was it, Monday morning on the way to school, I was listening to my iPod, and a teacher went to me, it was before school even started, 'take it out of your ear'.

The majority of pupils being interviewed believed that they had a right to own their break-time as a kind of reward for working in the classroom. Although the notion of hierarchy was mentioned above, during break-times there were different rules for talking. It seems as though the hidden curriculum comes into operation here by revealing a conflict in the unwritten rules, (learning of what is acceptable or not), as Jackson (1990) highlighted in his research. With the pupil who had the iPod in the ear, that could have been seen as her social-time and not class-time, but to the teacher the pupil was in uniform and on school premises. There can, therefore, be conflict in the hidden curriculum if it is not valued or understood equally by both sides, or even imposed onto the teacher by the expectations or formal rules of the school which, again, may fit into a more national framework of 'good practice'.

Moreover, the importance for pupils of understanding the rules of the hidden curriculum became apparent to me, during break-time especially. Pupils had to learn where they belonged. They had to negotiate their own identity, both within and between groups. Pupils had to be aware of who owned which space within the school and respect this. Some of these places were known by some teachers, but even these teachers did not discuss the meaning of these spaces in interviews. This may be because they did not know the importance of these spaces, which meant that the activities that occurred there were truly secret, (which seemed to be what the pupils reflected in the data). It could, however, be that the teachers understood the need for secrecy and respected these spaces, just like the pupils were not expected to enter the staff-room or listen to conversations between teachers. This, again, may reflect the unwritten rules of the hidden curriculum in terms of respect for each other. However, I would argue that the staff-room is more of a public space for one large group of teachers (one community), whereas break-time for pupils, as it is constructed presently, offers the chance for private spaces of self-differentiating groups and many different communities within the same space where ownership of space becomes of paramount importance.

Ownership of secret physical spaces during break-time

Some pupils were willing to share with me some of their secret places that they owned or inhabited within the school during break-

times. It became their territory, and they would even protect their spaces from any unwanted predators, who usually took the form of other groups or individuals from other groups.

Pupils, too, were aware that teachers did not often know about their secret world: break-time is a haven of activity and many groups actively participate in their secret world (with only a few in view of a teacher's eye). It is necessary to understand what goes on at break-time to be able to understand if this has any affect on the class-room and learning there.

Pupils seemed to have learned about ownership from possibly observing groups and from what others have said. Sometimes, (as in the above example) other groups tried to 'steal' their area, but usually did so with minimal success. The other issue of this ownership that emerged from the data was that some groups became very protective of their area, and appeared threatening to other groups as they walked past. Again, no mention of this was discussed in the teachers' interviews.

6994 – 7001

@ Cliques – Who owns which parts of the school at break-times? (I know you own the...).

(39G) Toilets!

® Yeah...showers!

(39G) Showers!

A year 7 group also admitted to owning part of the school grounds, but their reaction to certain groups revealed that some appeared threatening to them.

3022 – 3031

® Do certain groups own certain areas of the school at break-times?

(2A) Yes.

(6A) Yes.

(2A) We own the roundabout.

(1A) Our roundabout.

4893 – 4919

® Changing rooms?

(20D) Year 9s.

(22D) Yeah year 9 – 9R.

(20D) They're the Chavs – 38G, 37G.

(21D) They just hang out there at break-times, dinner, and just chat.

(20D) Yeah.

® Would you dare go, past them?

(21D) No, I'd go round.

® So they own that area?

(21D) Yeah.

® Lockers, D.O.L.?

(20D) Year 10s.

® What do you feel when you walk past little groups around?

(21D) Scared.

Pupils themselves were very aware of who 'owned' which part of the school, and which groups were friendly and which needed avoiding. One particular group, discussed below, owned a tree on the small field for three years and were very protective of it, as it represented memories for them that became part of their identity. This was seen as we were talking about this aspect of friendship in the focus groups, when many became emotional about the tree and the fun that they had created over the years.

9226 – 9233

25E and 23E went to show me their special 'hicleout' tree. When we got there (on the small field) they pointed to a kind of jagged circle on the trunk about 5 feet and 7 inches above the ground, but they had scratched 'hicleout' on it. There were also a number of tippex marks in the form of letters, below it. They seemed to think it had been there before and was an old group. However, there were also markings near theirs and they said it was a group of Year 10 who 'know it's ours in Summer'.

5641 – 5726

(24E) Someone was trying to steal our tree.

(26E) Year 10s.

(24E) They sat on the bench.

® So what did you do?

(24E) We like went up to them and sat on the bench and they went.

® If somebody did come around your tree, as a group what would you do?

(27E) Shout at them. (Inaudible) 'You don't own it!' – 'yeah we do!'

(28E) One of the girls who ran over there and tried to steal it from us, she walks home with me on the bus, so I was asking her, I said 'why did you steal...' and she said 'we got kicked out of our new place and now we've got a new place..' and I said, 'no you can't.'

® So you protect your tree?

(26E) Yeah.

(24E) Oh, it was really funny. T1 came and I'd just come down (the tree) and 23E just shot down the tree and we're like 'ssh' (the others were still up the tree). She was shouting at them and we were still at the top of the tree.

(28E) We were all laughing.

(23E) We could tell she knew.

(24E) It's too cold now. That tree is called the 'hicle tree' (hide out read wrong) and someone wrote on a piece of paper and everyone signed it and I put it in my purse.

® So that tree is really important?

(24E) Yeah.

(23E) Yeah.

(24E) Very.

(26E) We Tippex up the thingy and we made a cross, and buried the purse with our note in it.

(23E) We buried a ruler.

(26E) I have a twenty minute video of...tree.

® From your phone?

(26E) Yeah.

(28E) 23E can't get off the tree...we're writing our note, 24E gives a talk....27E starts singing.

(23E) I dropped 24E.

(24E)...on my head. She said put me down on the tree, but I put her down on 25E. (Inaudible).

(29E) It's like hide, but she wrote the 'd' with a gap in it'

@ So 'hicle', instead of hideout?

(27E) Yeah.

(23E) Remember when I fell out of the tree?

@ Is that like your friendship tree?

Yeah (unanimous).

(24E) It brought back our memories.

(26E) Remember when...(inaudible).

(24E) 25E used to get me a lavender every day.

(28E) Ah.

The friendship group above revealed how important their friendship was and still is. They had fun and made memories. They had a space to meet together in the secrecy of their own group. As there was no evidence that the purse, ruler etc. had been dug up this, again, revealed how secret their place and activities were. The tree seemed to represent their friendship and, as such, was a very important object. As a friendship group they had come to respect the tree as a symbol of their relationship and commitment to each other. Other groups, (even the group who tried to take the tree for their own group) eventually became aware of the unwritten rules of the hidden curriculum, and moved off to another area. They could see how strong this group's friendship was and they fought off any acts of resistance together. (We will return to acts of resistance in more detail, later on).

Wenger's (1998) discussion of identification and negotiability suggests that identities of participation involve acknowledging issues occurring at many levels, and includes that of claiming territories and deciding what is important, as in the above example. Wenger also identifies the notion of competition between resources (and in the above example, this relates to space and territory during break-time). As this aspect was discussed in relation to break-time, and emphasises the importance of the social, when applied to the class-

room it creates a problem: the tapestry of education, as it stands, offers little opportunity to negotiate identities, and generality means that pupils tend to be learning the same thing at the same time, with no acknowledgement of the importance of the social. This highlights a problem of the traditional educational design, in that it is too disconnected from real life and:

‘Too uniform to support meaningful forms of identification.... it is no surprise, then, that the playground tends to become the centre-piece of school life (and of school learning), that the class-room itself becomes a dual world where instruction must compete with message passing, and that some students either seek their identity in subversive behaviour or simply refuse to participate’ (Wenger, 2007, p. 269).

The data have revealed, therefore, how important friendships are at break-time, but not just that: the activities that are meaningful to the pupils seem to remain secret from teachers, as none of this information emerged from the teachers’ interviews. Pupils seem to find a sense of belonging in their groups and the activities they engage in, and this will inevitably help to construct their individual identity. It seems imperative that the unwritten rules of the hidden curriculum are adhered to for break-times to run smoothly, and that groups learn their place within the school. It was also noticeable from

the last section that some groups seem to create power, or even present a threat to other groups, by their ownership of areas around the school during break-times.

However, apart from break-time, this notion of 'threat' or power over other groups can also be observed within the class-room, where in the following example the pupils believed that the teacher was completely unaware of this episode.

Ownership of physical space within the class-room

The example below shows how one group (when they were in Year 7, two years ago) began to secretly own the whole space in the class-room for a small period of time, (seemingly unbeknown to the form-teacher), as they set class tables into 'cliques' and made the class sit where they told them in their form-room: this instance was instigated by the media and a new release of a film about 'cliques.'

5241 – 5249

(24E) One time we sat down, and the whole class was moved away from us and as you walked in it was like...

® Why – 'cos you used to say things to them?

(23E) It wasn't even normal.

(24E) Everyone was in their groups and we said you can sit over there, you're the mean group, you're the cool ones.

The other groups remembered this instance:

6036 – 6055

(31F) Do you remember when they set those tables into cliques?

(34F) Popular, cool, O.K. friendly.

(31F) Friendly – I was in friendly.

**® So where were you allowed to sit – no teachers set this out?
So they'd already set this out?**

(30F) We were 'friendly' cos we're nice to everyone.

® They'd labelled everyone – was it like a game to them?

(30F) Yes.

(33F) We've kind of matured since year 7.

(30F) Everyone's is mixed and not in cliques anymore.

(34F) Everyone's a lot closer now.

5251 – 5265

® Did you pair them off as they came in and group them up?

(26E) Yeah.

(24E) It wasn't us really...

(23E) Yeah, it was.

(24E) It wasn't.

® This was year 7?

(25E) Yeah.

(25E) The Bratz movie.

Freire (2010) may explain both the stealing of the tree, (from the example given before this one) and the present example above, (within the class-room) as representing 'cultural invasion'. Cultural invasion is where:

'Invaders penetrate the cultural context of another group, in disrespect of the latter's potentialities; they impose their own view of the world upon those they invade and inhibit the creativity of the invaded by curbing their expression...All domination involves invasion – at times physical and overt, at times camouflaged, with the invader assuming the role of a helping friend' (pp. 152-153).'

The above examples may have led to a loss of the groups' originality, and can be carried out by one class over another in the same society as is shown above. This power and cultural invasion, portrayed by many groups around the school, was also apparent during observing the two classes in Year 9. I noticed that there was some divide between the two classes and not that much interaction.

My initial belief that there was a divide between the two halves of the year was mainly supported by the girls' own responses in the focus groups, as discussed below. Some pupils even congregated on opposite sides of the play-ground. It was also believed that teachers made the 'rift' even more apparent by not allowing each class to go into the other classes form-room during break-times.

The other half of the year

® You don't seem to mention the other half of your year as your group?

(39G) No.

(41G) No.

(38G) They are completely different.

(37G) The other half of our year, we see them as really good. We used to get bad press all of the time, 'you are the worst out of your two years', you know what I mean? We see them as the people that we've got to beat.

(40G) 9G are all a big group we feel.

(38G) There are some EMOs, but no Chavs and that though.

(40G) No Chavs though.

® What are Geeks? Are there any?

(40G) They are really clever people.

(41G) Clever – (Inaudible).

(37G) Dedicated.

(40G) Like nice people, but very, very dedicated to their work.

(41G) They're like, a special group on their own.

Similarly another group from the same class as above also commented that the two halves of the year were different and implied that the other half showed more cohesion than their class. One pupil also implied that when they and another group fell out, it could be quite volatile and not easy to reconcile the friendship.

7990 – 8009

**® Have you noticed any difference between the two classes
(44H has just been moved into the other class)?**

(44H) Yeah – they're like all together, like.

(43H) They're like one big group...then they go off into their little groups.

(42H) Our group – like one group falls out with another group, then we'll be like, 'go away', you're like not joining our group and they'll be a loner 'til they make friends again.

(43H) Like our group and another group, who actually get along with each other most of the time.

® When you don't, you don't?

(42H) Yeah.

(43H) No, when ...war.

However the other half of the year's reactions were not so positive:

6527 – 6554

(30F) You feel quite isolated if you start to talk to people, not so much in our class. I speak to some people in the other class, but like some people in the other class, the people with the make-up and really nice hair, if I went and started talking to them I would feel isolated, I'd feel self-conscious.

® Are you threatened in a way?

(30F) Yeah.

(35F) Yeah. 'Cos you know if you're being really nice to them they don't like talk back to you.

(30F) Some people do, like I get on really well with like another pupil from the other class, but I was friends with her in Year 6 before we came up to high school.

® Do you see the other class as different to you?

(31F) Some people. You feel like really like self-conscious because they've got like all the boyfriends and stuff.

(30F) You feel like a loser.

® How would describe them then?

(32F) I don't know. I don't think people like them as much as they think they do.

6741 – 6767

® Do you notice anything at break-times the 'other half' do?

(35F) We're on the opposite side of the play-ground.

® Finally, from what has been suggested, have you got boundaries from 9R? You said you were separate in the play-ground?

(33F) We used to eat our lunch in the Geography room, but when T5 got 9R as a form class it was their form room so we kind of stayed away.

(30F) We did that without realising though. We didn't do it on purpose, we like them but we just decided it was their form room so we don't go in there. 'Cos we hated them in Year 7 and 8 they were always coming into our form room and we hated it 'cos it was our form room.

® Could it be anyone else, it's just you are 9G?

(34F) The teachers have told us they're not allowed in, so maybe the teachers have kind of stopped us from...

(30F) Yeah, it's 'cos they told us "don't share your form room." So I think it's the teachers splitting it. It's not their fault, but they could have allowed us to mix with their form rooms, but they were like 'no' you're not allowed in.

In the above example, it almost seems that the teachers were preventing the two halves of the year from mixing and the classes realised this, which seemed to create more group-differentiation. It seemed to create difference rather than unity. The data revealed how the structure of the school, and the formal rules, did not allow the two forms to socialise in each others form-rooms and the teachers were

blamed for this by the pupils. On reflection, it seems that the teachers had very little power to alter this situation even if they wanted to. Unfortunately, it seems that the way the teachers dealt with the issue of separate form-rooms could have hindered, as opposed to helped, the two groups interact, but also the pupils themselves stated that it was their space that they owned, and both groups seemed to respect each other's privacy (learned the unwritten rules). Alternatively, the actions of the teachers could be explained by Freire's (2010) notion of avoiding the consequences of 'cultural invasion,' so as to keep the originality of each Year 9 group. This originality was displayed as an important aspect of friendships and, again, very few teachers referred to this aspect in the interviews. It emerged in the focus groups through the labelling of other groups in a comparison with their own.

Labelling and self-differentiation

Within the year 9 group discussed above were examples of rivalry between groups, and examples of how labelling self-differentiated one group from another. The first sequence involves one group describing 'Chavs' and defending their 'anti-Chav' position. The second brief example refers to EMO's. It was surprising just how strong the groups felt about other groups. In the interviews, some groups really defended their group and their group-identity, and when asked to describe other groups, were critical about them and seemed to have no intention at all of being friends with them. This issue is

best explored by looking at the interviews where 'Chavs' were discussed.

4939 – 4943

® How do they stand out as being Chavs?

(22D) Hair and short skirts.

(20D) They have Chav bags and stuff.

4963 – 4970

(21D) I'm thinking about...thick make-up and er...

(20D) Heavy foundation.

(21D) Shoes – they wear like rubbish, like shoes that always like...

(22D) Thin shoes.

5423 – 5425

(27E) Police definition: Can't stop arguing and violence.

(23E) They talk like, 'Alright babe, how are yer?'

7050 – 7055

(38G) Chavs think they're hard when they go out and they think it's cool to hang round street corners and like, smoke, drink.

(39G) They think that's all cool and...

(37G) They have different activities out of school than we do.

7062 – 7070

(38G) That's what I mean about them, they think they're amazing, hard and everything in school, but as soon as they're out and you see them in Rhyl, they walk round and they're dead scared of you...

(40G) They leg it.

(37G) ...These hard Chavs, but out of school, they bunk and everything and they think they're clever.

7091 – 7096

(38G) Other people see them as Chavs, and we don't want to be known as Chavs, we don't hang around with them.

(37G) If we congregate with Chavs, we get called Chavs. So, if we were to join their group, people would even say 'what you doing hangin' around with them?'

From the above data it seems that this competition between these two groups remained secret to teachers (as this rivalry was not disclosed in interviews). This can not promote positive contexts for learning, if these attitudes are carried over from break-time into the lesson, without the teacher realising.

The second sequence is an example of a group who are proud to be Chavs, and describe their attributes in a positive way. This group is the same group referred to in a negative way above.

8092 – 8146

(43H) We're Chavs.

® You're Chavs?

Yes (unanimous).

® Define Chavs.

(43H) Trackies, all them Burberry stuff, like.

® Is it the posh stuff though?

(42H) Yeah.

® You're looking casual, but you've got all designer labels?

(44H) Yeah.

(42H) Like Burberry jeans and trackies.

(43H) If you look at 20D group and our group, they wear proper, posh, not posh stuff, like but different to what we wear. We wear design labels, but we don't... we don't go out in Chanel and all this.

(44H) They've got the little bangles and look all fancy and stuff.

® They're real?

(43H) Yes.

(42H) We all wear the same as each other but like in a different way. Like a Chav mix; Lacoste, Nike, McKenzie.

® What are they classed as, If you're Chavs?

(42H) Snobs?

(44H) No.

(43H) They're 'popular.'

® Are you not popular?

(42H) No, they're like cool but popular people.

® Because?

(42H) Everyone likes them.

(43H) Everyone knows us, but like not for good stuff (no).

® Are they known for good stuff are they?

(42H) They're known for more good stuff than we are.

In the above examples, one group tried to find negative reasons for not being like Chavs and the other group prided themselves on being Chavs. There was even a dislike shown towards what they did, as they were 'different' to them. Both groups had their unique identity, and by that seemed to own the right to be able to include or exclude others within the school context. They exaggerated their differences and over-estimated their similarities (much like stereotyping). This secret world, if left undiscovered, may infringe upon learning within the class-room, if certain pupils are unable to leave their break-time

identities behind and switch to their class-room identity. It would seem to be very difficult for some pupils to be able to leave their group identities or opinions of other groups behind at the class-room door. This idea fits into Lave and Wenger's notion of Communities of Practice and the idea of Legitimate Peripheral Participation. Some pupils may have invested a large part of their identity into their friendship groups (one Community of Practice) at the expense of classroom learning.

This second example below again reinforces the points made above about the impact some groups have over other groups' identity and the problem of being associated with certain groups.

7106 – 7110

(37G) We've got one or two phases of girls in our class, who we call them 'Emos' – they went through a phase of cutting their wrists and if we hang round with them, people think 'oh, my God what you do hanging around with them'...hanging around with people who do things like that.

The group that a pupil belongs to seems to give them a certain identity during break-times, and the labels attached to the groups seem consistent across the years, but again, little reference was made by the teachers to the names pupils attached to groups, which may suggest that it was not important to them (and chose to ignore it) or that this aspect of friendship remained secret to many teachers.

Pupils also had definite preferences for certain groups and dislikes for other groups. Groups did become protective of, not only each other's territory, but also of their groups. Certain ritual behaviour was talked about by some groups, that they performed to prevent other pupils entering their group. The following extracts reveal how members of some groups seemed to prevent other pupils from entering their groups.

Protection of groups

8059 – 8069

® How do you stop people coming into your groups?

(43H) Don't talk to them...don't look at them really.

(42H) They just know that, it's a sense, they just know that...

(44H) They don't even ask.

® Like a dog that growls?

(42H) This is my territory, not yours.

This group protection and cohesion was also shown by another year group:

3892 – 3896

(15C) We've got our group, 'cos we've got similar situations at home and not many people in my class have.

(16C) People know not to like to 'hang' with us because they know that we're together and we don't let them in.

At the other extreme one friendly group who had flexible boundaries (and allowed others into their group) was rejected for their offer of friendship:

2486 – 2488

(2A) We invited a girl in yesterday actually 'cos she was all on her own...come on the roundabout with us, but she only lasted about 5 seconds, she just walked out.

Although this all happens at break-time, Bronfenbrenner's model would assume that there would be interconnected contexts (break-time and class-room), so this accepting or rejecting of fellow peers into their groups may have direct implications for the learning environment, and indirectly for the emergence of the ZPD. If the teacher wants to encourage collaboration, then she/he really would benefit from learning the rules of the hidden curriculum in terms of who gets on with whom, and understand how strongly (positively and negatively) some groups feel about other groups, and its possible

ramifications for collaboration and learning. If somebody 'won't let them in' (in other words, another peer from a different group) or believes 'this is my territory, not yours' during break-time, then why should this be any different in the class-room? If a pupil will not work with another pupil from a competing group, or pretends to work or collaborate with them, (unbeknown to the teacher), then this could be explained by applying Wenger's (1997) notion of non-participation and the concept of marginality. In the above situation, Wenger may explain marginality in relation to the pupil choosing who they sought connections with, and who they chose to avoid.

Pupils, therefore, belong to groups by choice, and some groups have very rigid boundaries, whilst others are more elastic and are more accepting of others. It has been seen that, during break-times, there was a desire to inhabit and own spaces as a group. However, this also appeared to be the case in the class-room as well, with many pupils expressing a wish to choose collaborative partners and groups. There was evidence of pupils making clear choices about who they wanted to have relationships with in the class-room. However, as can be seen below, pupils were sometimes put together randomly or given seating plans and expected to collaborate, even if they did not want to.

Seating arrangements

In relation to teachers' pedagogical decision-making, again what seems to be positive for the teacher was not always so pleasing to the pupil, and there seemed, again, to be a mismatch of opinion. Groupings of friends and their seating arrangements within the classroom seemed especially important to the Key Stage 3 pupils, and they made a specific point of stating this and the affect of splitting up peer groups had on their schooling.

6300 – 6332

® Do you think teachers actually understand the importance of friendships?

No! (unanimous).

(31F) They're like, 'Just sit there', it won't affect you, but it does.

(30F) It really does. Like in French the teacher did this weird thing, where she organised us in birthdays, funnily enough we ended up next to our friends.

(35F) 'Cos everyone had their birthdays next to each other, so she had to move us again.

® So the idea of that was to move you away from your friends because?

(30F) Yeah.

® Why?

(30F) I work better sitting with my friends, I hate sitting away from my friends.

® So why do you think the teacher did the plan then?

(30F) 'Cos she wants to wreck our lives.

(31F) I end up talking more when my friends are away from me.

(33F) Yeah.

(35F) Yeah.

The extreme notion of teachers 'wrecking' pupils' lives by enforcing seating plans was apparent in one of the comments made above, and some teachers actually used seating arrangements as part of their pedagogical planning:

321 – 325

® You're lucky in your class-room as it's a newer mobile, but you have it organised in a certain way don't you?

(T1) If I do group work, it's probably only for a couple of minutes and they can turn round, and I like them in rows.

It was clear, however, that the majority of pupils felt strongly about how some teachers manipulated seating arrangements to split up some peer groups, as the pupils believed that their friends offered support for, rather than being detrimental to, learning. Some pupils did, however, expect to be split up in some lessons, and the consequence led to very little work or learning being achieved:

5961 – 5972

® What makes you learn with your friends and what makes you not learn?

(30F) When you're sitting with your friends you learn more 'cos I don't feel stupid, like when you go blank and can't remember the spelling of a word, a simple word, you don't feel stupid to ask them.

(32F) You don't feel stupid to ask your friends, but if you're stupid asking how you spell this or what's the answer to this? It's obvious you just can't remember.

One possible solution for the above situation may be to introduce self-organisation for all lessons, as happens when teachers do not have seating plans, or to work out seating together (pupil and

teacher). Blatchford et al. (2003) also appreciated that 'seating arrangements are important in supporting working arrangements' (2003, p. 164), but that the seating must match the learning aims. The composition of groups may also change if friendship groups change.

Similarly, Pellegrini and Blatchford (2003) discuss ecological psychology and the notion of 'synomorphy' which also highlights the importance of matching the design of a context with the activities and actions within that setting. The suggestion from their observations is that where a mis-match occurs, achievement itself is not affected, but attitudes and behaviour may be.

Moreover, Pellegrini and Blatchford (2003) suggest a link between a pupil's seat choice and their overall feelings about school in general, but acknowledge the difficulties in explaining this link through lack of research available. They do suggest, however, that 'pupil attitudes are predicted by seating' (2003, p. 94), but their focus concentrated more on nearness to the teacher as being one of the main factors producing effective learning and participation, along with smaller class sizes.

A small group of pupils actually did self-organise in one lesson and it seemed to work, but the way the teacher responded during interview seemed to imply that it was not something she had thought about pedagogically, that is, pupils actually being successful at self-

organisation. The evidence of self-organisation came from a group of three friends.

314 – 319

® It's the 'odd numbers' problem again?

(T1) Well that's interesting because in the year 7 group I have, there is a threesome there, with pupil E, pupil F and pupil G. I have them for 2 hours on a Friday, and they take it in turns to choose where they're sitting and they've done that themselves.

Generally, pupils said they learn better with friends. Even with the minority of pupils who felt they were distracted by friends, self-organisation could also be applied here, as it would allow each pupil the responsibility to identify how best they learned. Unfortunately, from a socio-cultural perspective, this 'choice' would provide a dilemma for teachers because class-room management, (of which seating is just one aspect) and notions of control are seen as essential requisites of the job, and allowing 'choice' is contrary to accepted and reified practice.

Apart from seating arrangements, another area of conflict that emerged from the data and observations, and again reflecting discontinuities between the teachers' and pupils' voice in relation to the importance of friends, was related to a general expectation by teachers for pupils to be able to effectively switch from break-time

mode to class-room mode. However, as can be seen by the data, the construction of the self is partly embedded in identification with friendship groups, and these identities are not left behind on entering the class-room, contrary to what some teachers would like to believe. Some pupils, however, seem adept at hiding this, whilst others were unable to, and situations arose from this inability.

It is evident from the data that break-time forms the focus to study and learn about individual personalities, and that the class-room is not viewed as appropriate for this by many teachers, and the majority of teachers expect the pupils to switch to 'class mode' as soon as the break-time ends; this includes leaving any arguments unfinished. The three teachers below seem to show complete denial of the notion of distributed self, and do not seem to understand or value the socio-cultural aspect of education. Teacher seven still expected pupils not to be affected by their experiences outside of the classroom. This was echoed by Gatto's (2005) reflection on his own teaching, when he believed one lesson he passed on to the pupils was one of 'indifference' where they were expected to switch on and switch off like a light switch. However, my data reveal that identity and experience does not have an on – off switch. There is, therefore, conflict between teachers who acknowledge the social in their lessons, and those who imply and almost demand that pupils can switch off after break-times.

Some of the teachers' views below, therefore, reflect Smith's (2004) argument in relation to the hidden curriculum, where personal qualities (such as social talk) are deemed as beneficial in one setting (break-time) but may be seen as detrimental in another setting (the classroom).

Distributed selves

910 – 915

® Have you ever experienced a problem from break-time continuing into your lesson?

(T3) No, no, no. They tend to leave that behind, and when in class they tend to focus pretty well on what they're doing in class. They don't bring their personal issues in.

1562 – 1570

(T5) Not really, the odd little snippet of what happens at home, deal with it at home scenario. I try not to let....from outside affect, but obviously...They can move themselves...lick their wounds quietly and then...Generally in the fullness of time I believe that in certain situations, especially amongst young people, do tend to resolve themselves anyway, and I think sometimes the more fuss you make over it, the bigger a deal it becomes. They quite like the safe haven of knowing that the learning is separate from the emotional outside.

2001 – 2005

(T7) You're interfering because it's nothing to do with their learning, it's, it's, it's, it's their social. What I would call their social life outside the class, it's nothing to do with the learning that goes on here...I would still expect them to actually engage with the learning.

1054 – 1058

® Even if you're not teaching certain girls, it is widespread that there have been instances of girls falling out?

(T3) Yes, that's right. But you try and control that within your lesson and they shouldn't bring that in, if you can avoid it.

1986 – 1997

® Is there any times when you have had to intervene for any reason?

(T7) No.

® Fine.

(T7) I've been teaching for 10 years and never had to.

® Do you think it's a learning process for them to go through?

(T7) Course It Is!

2007 – 2011

® Do you see break-time and class-room as separate?

(T7) It is separate and they should know the difference. If they carry on the break-times into the lesson you know you're not going to have a very good learning environment.

In the above example, the teacher made a complete distinction between personal and social in relation to break-times and lessons, and seemed to imply from the statement that the social should not impinge on the personal. Both should be kept separate, which, again, shows a lack of understanding of the complexity of learning, as very little theory deals with distributed self as intra-individual models are the most common. This view also supports Edwards and Miller's (2007) research which suggested that learning from one context is not often recognised as a 'resource' for another context. The evidence of this inability of some pupils to be able to switch-off after break-times can be seen in the arguments that were observed in class and discussed in interviews. Moreover, in terms of Wenger's (1998) trajectories, some teachers expect pupils to use their 'outbound trajectory' when moving from break-time to classroom, which would allow the pupil the ability to find a new position within

the learning community and to develop new relationships. However, as can be seen below, this position does not allow for arguments.

Over-spill of arguments

The notion of activities during break-time affecting the subsequent lesson becomes apparent when arguments within groups are considered. The majority of pupils stated, in the examples below, that their fall-outs affected their concentration within the lesson, and some even stated that their learning was also affected, which supports Cullingford's view that:

'Whatever the surface matter relating to the lesson, there are all kinds of disconnected thoughts that are taking place, sometimes in addition to, sometimes as an alternative to, the matter in hand' (p. 171).

2669 – 2674

® If you do fall out how does this affect your learning in the next lessons?

(1A) A little bit – we feel a bit upset because we might hurt somebody else's feelings. Like yesterday we fell out and 5 minutes later we were friends again.

2842 – 2850

® How did it affect your learning in that lesson?

(1A) Yeah...I usually just don't bother with that lesson – it really gets on my nerves and it's one of my worst lessons...

® If it was a different lesson and the same thing happened?

(1A) I wouldn't have concentrate as much, but I would still have got on with it – end up daydreaming more.

3615 – 3631

® How does fallings out affect the next lesson, or does it?

(13B) You have to sit next to each other and then you have to share, and it's really annoying 'cos they slap the book up...It's really annoying because if...

® Does the teacher realise?

(13B) No!

(10B) No!

(7B) Only when we start shouting.

® Do you tell the teacher?

(10B) There's no point.

4282 – 4306

® So what happens if you fall out at break-time?

(17C) You can't concentrate you're worried, you're nervous.

® When break-time finishes and you know you've got to go through next lesson, how do you sort it out?

(15C) You don't want to talk to them.

(16C) You don't talk to them as they're acting gay.

(15C) What we do if we fall out because we're next to each other in most lessons, it's kind of awkward because you're not allowed to move 'cos teachers will shout at you if you move but you don't want to sit next to them.

® So how does it affect your learning?

(19C) It really does 'cos you concentrating on like when we're ever going to be friends.

® Are you thinking about the next break-time and when to sort it out?

(15C) Yes. All the time.

5036 – 5038

(24E) Because if, like, you've had a fall out, it affects your school work. If you've fallen out with someone and you're upset about it and you don't do any work.

5042 – 5044

(24E) Sometimes when you've fallen out with people, your minds like, I want to make up with them, but I don't in a way. You'd rather think about them than do your school work.

As Cullingford states: 'The volatility of children's friendships, with shifting patterns of allegiance and ostracism, is well known' (2002, p. 101). However, I would argue that much of what goes on still remains secret to teachers, and it is only when an argument emerges and becomes 'public', that some teachers become aware of it and try to sort it out. However, this is often too late, as can be seen from the example below. Here, a teacher's professional career was compromised by an argument that had, unbeknown to the teacher, over-spilled into the lesson from break-time. As Cullingford (2002) further states:

'For many pupils it is the hidden curriculum that is more important...The school is not just a series of formal inputs carefully imbibed but full of gaps, between lessons, in breaks and at lunchtime. These 'gaps', which provide so much of the more intense emotional engagement, will often spill over into lessons' (p. 171).

483 – 525

® Do various things that have happened during break-time continue into the class-room?

(T2) Always. The best of it was, they did it during an inspection.

® Lovely. How did they manifest their behaviour then? How did they show that?

(T2) Well, (sigh) It wasn't that extreme...for me or you, but...

® No.

(T2) But the inspector just happened to be sitting near them at the time and everyone else was working in their groups very well and on task, but it wasn't until I got there that I realised that they were bickering about what was going on outside. No work

had been done, because an incident had happened at lunch-time and this was..

® Was this one group or between groups?

(T2) This was one group and it just escalated and escalated and escalated.

® Were they trying to sort it out in the lesson, was that what they were trying to do or had it gone beyond that?

(T2) Oh, it had gone beyond that, because one of the group, (there used to be one person who was in that group who was the peacemaker and the mediator), she had removed herself from that group intentionally, and she moved herself last year, and now she has made an absolute effort to steer herself away. Without her in that group there is no-one to offer any peace. And because there's another person in that group who actually enjoys the fun and the frolics, and actually tends to sort of poke the bear and sit back and watch the entertainment.

® Do you think they see it as a game, because they seem to plan things?

(T2) To be honest I think that would be crediting them with a little bit more intelligence than I think they have. I think it just overflows.

The research by Yinger and Hendricks-Lee (1993) offers a possible solution for teachers to the above problem, by acknowledging the need to adopt the socio-cultural approach and accept that pupils have lives outside the class-room that can, and do, influence learning. They suggest that some teachers do not employ, or even possess, 'ecological intelligence'. This means that decision-making and control is strictly done by the teacher, and learning is dictated by the teacher and is not relational or negotiated. Teachers know very well that the outside influences what goes on in the class-room, but they have no strategies to deal with this, so they deny it. The richness of qualitative data allows us to understand that two contrary positions can be held simultaneously in the service of living a life.

This is not a tenable position, however, to adopt, so if we employ ecological theory to the dilemma, it may point to the structure of schools that do not allow time to deal with this and highlight that the nature of the teacher-pupil relationship is not personal. In the class-room behaviour can be restricted by the teacher's demands, which may imply that the sense of self is lost or is competing with, and replaced by, a different self. The skill to manage these different selves is needed. In relation to Vygotsky (1978), this notion of a 'lost self' or feeling that they are not truly themselves (or in equilibrium),

may have major implications for the ZPD: if the pupil cannot form the relationship necessary in the class-room which can lead to exchange and change, and inevitably allows learning to take place, because they have not been allowed to be 'themselves' in the class-room, then it may be a possibility that the notion of the ZPD may be severely challenged and be incapable of emerging. Also, if they have any unfinished business during break-time, they may not want, or be able, to concentrate in lessons, which may lead to a poor quality of relationship between teacher and pupil. This relationship would have direct consequences for the emergence of a ZPD.

Wenger's (1998) list of suggestions from Chapter Two regarding what affects participation levels within Communities of Practice is relevant here, and may help to explain why some pupils have problems negotiating their identities or engaging fully in learning. As Wenger states, the amount of participation within a Community of Practice may depend on a number of relevant factors. For example, how the pupils locate themselves in their social landscape could ultimately affect their general behaviour, or feelings, about school and themselves (and hence impact on identity). Also, the pupil is able to select what they care about, and is able to neglect other aspects of their environment, which may mean a choice between social or learning. Pupils can also choose who they seek connections with or seek to ignore, which again may have implications for the relationship between the pupil and the teacher, or general collaborative work, especially if the teacher is unaware that certain

pupils do not get on, or have had an argument during break-time. Each of the above can, therefore, affect the degree of participation within the classroom Community of Practice, and is largely influenced by the secret world of friendships.

Similarly, Searle's (1997) socio-cultural research may provide a way to understand why so many pupils have problems switching off, on entry to the class-room. Searle takes a political stance of how to restore education (especially the morality side) after the effects of the Thatcher Government, the New Labour Government, and the Education Act of 1988 with league tables, OFSTED and the imposition of the National Curriculum. His radical and alternative approach allows power to be redistributed more equally among its participants, by allowing communities to organise their own teaching and learning initiatives using the school as the resource, where curriculum and community become unified. Similarly, choice becomes a resource open to both teachers and pupils and marginality avoided.

Searle (1997) blames the National Curriculum for reinforcing the one-way education (monopoly of knowledge), and suggests involving the communities with their education. Although Searle refers to the more global communities, (multi-cultural homes and surrounding areas outside of school) I believe, from my research, that these values apply to the local communities within the school, namely Community of Practices within the class-room and the community of break-time.

So many teachers remain ignorant of the practices occurring at break-time and, similarly, of the impact of the importance of friends within the class-room, and secret acts of resistance.

Moreover, using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) notion of the ecological environment relating to an analogy of a Russian doll, it can be seen from the research how important it is to recognise the second level, where it was necessary to look beyond the present setting, (level one or microsystem, which is the immediate setting containing the developing person) to the relations between the interconnections. Bronfenbrenner, (1979), states that these connections can be, 'as decisive for their development as events taking place within a given setting.' (1979, p. 3). This acknowledges that teaching is only one part of how pupils learn, and they can be affected by other relations: it was suggested by the link of home and school, but I would like to propose that the link between break-time and class-room has been overlooked, and using Bronfenbrenner's notion of interconnectedness would provide an explanation as to why some pupils have problems adapting to class-room work when entering the class-room directly from break-time.

The importance of the linkages between settings (break-time and lessons) and how relations with another context can affect negotiations and learning in the immediate environment was initially a concern at the beginning of the research, but the focus was on finding out about the pupils' friendships during break-times and how,

if at all, these impact on subsequent lessons. The teachers need to now be aware of Bronfenbrenner's model to understand the power that a secret world of friendship can create. The notion of 'exosystem' can be applied to teachers as a possible explanation for their lack of knowledge, or secrecy of many pupils' worlds, of which the teacher is unable to access with the present structure of schools. The majority of teachers are unaware of this secret world of friendship as they are often denied access, or do not even attempt access, (no break-time duty etc. and the idea that break-times are separate from learning in the class-room); the ecosystem:

'Consists of one or more settings that does not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in that setting' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 237).

The teacher, then, can be directly affected by this ecosystem (in this instance, break-time).

The other issue that emerged from the above data (lines 496-498) is interesting notions of the teacher's view: that all they need is intelligence to 'control' this, with more thought they could make a choice and ignore it and work harder. This may be explained by the cognitive ability of the individuals within the group. Schmeichel et al (2008) found that cognitive ability helps in the control of emotions,

and that emotions can be hidden by those with higher cognitive capacity often to their benefit, and that there were individual differences in relation to regulation of emotions linked to cognitive ability. This is an important issue for teachers to be aware of and may help to explain why some pupils behave the way they do, and others rarely get into trouble, although all the pupils really value the social. These arguments started off secret, but unfortunately, it was often too late, once they became public, for the teacher to prevent escalation and pedagogical ramifications in terms of learning.

The importance of the social and friendships to the pupils was therefore highlighted through arguments such as those above, but also through secret acts of resistance. Secret behaviour embedded in friendship included aspects such as note passing and other non-verbal communication: these activities can be termed 'acts of resistance', and were often related to issues such as boredom (sometimes relating to groups not sitting together) and the need to fill an otherwise empty space with interaction.

Acts of resistance

This secrecy can begin to act as a powerful tool for the pupils to use. As teachers' jobs act as power brokers, (by often controlling many aspects of the pupils' life), acts of resistance from the pupils can be seen to emerge through friendships and relationships. Hence, some pupils engage in multiple acts of resistance in the face of pupils'

powerlessness, or even oppression, and much of this resistance is enacted through the framework of relationships with peer groups. As Parker (1989) suggests:

‘If we want to develop an adequate understanding of power we have to link it to the notion of resistance. Power reproduces particular relations between people in such a way that resistance is suppressed’ (p.27).

As suggested above, acts of resistance seem to emerge from pupils being bored, and in lessons are secretly played out in terms of note-passing, non-verbal communication and use of objects for attention of the peer group.

The issue of boredom was raised in many interviews, and notes seemed to be used as an outlet for communication. The note passing seems to be about filling a boring space by interacting, and in similar line with the various non-verbal communication instances observed. In the following examples ‘boredom’ is explained through; teacher’s voice, tone and language, writing off the board, and a general lack of excitement.

3351 – 3353

(10B) My friend sits next to me, I really like her and she’s really nice, in lessons when I’m bored, I write ‘I’m bored’ and I pass it to her.

3389 – 3409

® When do you plan to write these notes?

(10B) It just happens in lessons.

(8B) If you get bored, it just makes the lesson still interesting.

® How do you get bored then?

(9B) When you're writing down off the board and they go on and on and on about what to do and...

(13B) I think it's the voice a teacher teaches with...

(11B) It's sometimes the language when the teacher speaks in the same tone.

(9B) They have to make it more exciting, not going on and on in the same voice, because that gets boring...

(13B) Like when T2 reads a book she goes 'BANG' and the door opens.

3431 – 3432

(10B) If it's a really, really exciting lesson, then we don't bother doing notes, but if it's really boring we do notes.

Other groups who sent notes also wrote information of a social nature containing mini interactions between friends, as revealed in the examples below:

4747 – 4763

® What would be on your notes if you had them occasionally?

(21D) Nice words, like 'sorry' and such.

® So if you've fallen out and such?

(22D) Yes.

(21D) And you can write them why you're upset and stuff like that and mm.

(22D) You just write about what you're doing this week-end and I bet I can guess your favourite celebrity and...stuff like that.

® So nothing about work whatsoever?

No (unanimous).

The notes above were largely of a friendly and social nature, but there were also instances that revealed some negative use of notes in the class-room:

12838 - 12851

On 4A's table, the girl opposite her puts a note in her pen lid (seemingly unseen by 4A and her friend) and passes it back and forward between her neighbour, with much smirking going on.

I alert the teacher assistant to this (by pointing to my notes as she peers over my shoulder) and she discreetly meanders to the front having spotted it in action and takes it off them. The teacher is then also informed discreetly, and reads the note put on her desk.

The teacher then takes the two girls involved off 4A's table outside the room for a chat, and requests to see them at the end of the lesson.

12881 - 12886

The teacher concludes the lesson, the group pack up and the two girls are again questioned at the end about the note and the consequences of 4A and her friend finding it are spelt out. The note was written about them, but apparently started off as fun

and was not meant maliciously. The note was passed on to me and 4A and her friend knew nothing of it.

Luckily, in the instance above, the note was intercepted before it caused any long-term harm, but this obviously goes on and many teachers may be unaware of it. As Wenger (1998) stipulates, the traditional class-room remains too far away from the real world and does not support 'meaningful forms of identification' (p. 269). It is a struggle to negotiate identities. There becomes a tension between a teachers' instructions and other important business as seen by the pupils themselves, such as social talk and message passing, which as Wenger (1998) suggests may lead to some pupils not concentrating fully, and encouraging them to 'seek their identity in subversive behaviour or refuse to take part' (p. 269). There is an apparent conflict between meaningful identity and learning. In the above situation, the notes seemed to act as boundary objects for the peer groups (Wenger, 1998) by providing a tool to co-ordinate sub-contexts of break-time with that of the class-room.

Also, Phelan et al. (1994) suggested that, in a study they carried out, many pupils complained of being bored as the lessons were 'uninspiring' and teacher-centred, and 'their lack of opportunity to interact with classmates' was offered as 'a source of their disengagement' (1994, p. 68), which seems to fit with what emerged.

In terms of pedagogy, Meyer and Turner (2002) found that the pupils' emotions, especially enjoyment and boredom, altered with their involvement levels and, similarly, when pupils were able to self-regulate within activities, then they were more autonomous and able to adjust the challenges upwards, and even change their negative feelings from boredom to enjoyment. This interest in emotions again reinforces the socio-cultural emphasis, (Research aim 3) especially the notion that the individuals' identity is a mixture of both personal and social factors which are seemingly intertwined and can affect learning.

Moreover, Meyer and Turner (2002) noted that friendships were essential to pupils' functioning 'in what they perceived to be an exclusive and often disengaging setting' (p. 69). It was seen as disengaging because the teacher-centred instructional practices did not equate with their emotional, intellectual and social needs. Friends provided the affective bond in the class-room and 'enlivened an otherwise un-stimulating setting' (2002, p. 72). Friends would, therefore, seem to provide at least the emotional and social engagement necessary for their well-being. I would also suggest that friends could provide intellectual realm if they were allowed to support each other or collaborate, and if not, through boredom, they fill their cognitive capacity through certain acts of resistance (such as note-passing, signs etc.).

A small group of friends would use their mobile phones to stay in contact when teachers in lessons did not let them talk:

8424 – 8466

® Do you text each other between lessons when you're split up?

(44H) No.

(43H) Sometimes, yeah.

(42H) If we're together, we'll just like, if the teacher's doesn't like us talking, we'll just like text on the phone...

(43H) ...and you give it to the other person.

(42H) We'll text it and then give the phone to 44H.

® Where are your phones, in your bag?

(44H) Yeah.

(43H) In my shorts.

(42H) Up my sleeve.

® If you're split in lessons, do you still text?

(43H) Yeah.

(42H) I text 43H.

(42H) Messin' and being bored.

(43H) I've only done it once.

(42H) I text everybody outside school...not just people in school.

® Is it planned or...?

(42H) Bored.

(42H) It's because they text yer.

(44H) And you just need to text back.

(42H) Or you're bored.

The above examples all indicate that when some pupils become bored (including being denied the chance to talk to their friends in lessons), they display acts of resistance. Cullingford (2002) suggests that schools, by their very nature, encourage passivity, by demanding

what pupils do and by denying choice. As a consequence, the pupils try to find something to fill their time 'and the most immediate ways of doing this are anti-social.' (p. 109).

Apart from note-passing and the use of mobile phones, another aspect of friendship that I observed was how certain objects (in a way, partly like the mobile phone above, being hid up sleeves etc. and passed around the group) formed part of the focus of interaction. Parker (1989) discusses the meaning of objects as a sign and relates this to a football scarf, and this meaning is understood 'by virtue of its relations with other items of clothing, not because the signified is in some magical way woven into the wool' (p.51). Parker suggests that there are two ways at looking at these 'relations' within a sign system. Firstly, there are alternatives that may be selected (chose a scarf instead of hat for example and related to their meaning not use) and secondly, the signs can be combined in a variety of ways (the scarf may be worn around the head rather than neck). More importantly, but related, is the fact that Parker suggests, 'the selection of signs and their combinations by a social actor also carry with them the self-presentations of persons within their own community' (1989, p.51). Also, inappropriate wear or choice must be explained or understood by other members of the community. By presenting these signs to the community or group, people are reconstructing their image depending on their clothes and actions. If applied to school, Parker's notion of 'relations' can partly account for the fact that a glove, a tie and some mascara were used in the

following examples as signs within their groups, and representing themselves secretly as acts of resistance.

Alternatively, these acts of resistance can be explained by Wenger's (1998) notion of 'peripherality', which is seen as one form of non-participation. Here, the following examples could be explained by the action of the pupil preventing themselves from becoming a full, or even a legitimate member of the learning community, by choosing to commit an act of resistance instead of learning. The pupils' involved in the acts of resistance (below) can be said to display 'inbound trajectories', as they can be seen as investing identities into their groups to become, or remain, full participating members at the expense of their learning, where they remain Legitimate Peripheral participants or even non-participants as suggested above.

9072

Teacher asks 24E to remove her one black glove.

9286 – 9290 (Chemistry after being split)

24E points to her one black glove.

24E peers towards 26E with an exaggerated expression.

26E acknowledges.

9341

24E is asked to remove her black glove again.

9453

24E puts her black glove on and talks about her mum etc.

9492 (R.E.)

24E had glove on.

9529 – 9557

The teacher walks over to 23E and 26E's table (as 23E asks what to do again).

26E puts her mascara on directly under the nose of the teacher in a very exaggerated manner, smiling and looking to her left as she does about 3 sweeps of her eye lashes. The teacher then realises and confiscates it, but 26E negotiates and can get it back at the end. She was able to keep it on and did not have to wash it off.

It was actually 28E's mascara.

28E was threatened with the act of her being moved, but again through negotiating and promising to be good, she remained where she was and said, 'I'll be good.'

28E drinks her bottle of water and turns to 23E and 26E.

23E gets the work explained again.

26E was again asked to move or leave the lesson, but replies that 'I'm working well and not disturbing 23E.'

28E reads.

Teacher returns to front.

26E throws small bits of rubber at different members of her group. (28E and 24E).

Again in Maths the glove appeared:

9686

24E wore her black glove.

The tie was also used for attention of the group in Geography whilst watching a video: however, this pupil had broken school rules and was wearing school uniform whilst the rest of her group were in their own clothes:

10118 – 10154

24E continues fiddling with her tie.

24E takes her tie off and ties it in a bow on the top of her left leg and then covers it up.

24E boogies from side to side.

26E squeaks her chair.

28E pulls her eyebrows up.

24E takes tie off leg and sits on floor in front of 29E.

The video mentions a name of a pupil in the class and many giggle with her.

26E scratches chair again.

27E concentrates on the screen.

23E says 'Ah' (at picture of old man).

26E and 28E laugh.

There is a camel on the video and most of the class like it. The teacher refers to it as their favourite creature.

26E jokingly says, 'it's 28E.'

26E clicks fingers. 23E says 'Stop it!'

24E fiddles with 29E's socks.

26E and 25E try to copy each others crossed fingers.

A pupil on the table takes 24E's tie and puts it on, whilst watching the forest being cleared on the video.

10175 – 10177

Pupils go back to original places.

29E passes the tie back to 24E who proceeds to put it on.

10198 – 10200

(DURING BREAK-TIME and the following lunch, 24E was given an extra-large hoodie to wear that covers her school uniform up, by a friend in the class).

A complementary explanation for acts of resistance to that of Parker's can be provided by Freire, (2010) who uses an analogy of a bank to describe some teacher's perceptions of education in his focus on pedagogy and the oppressed: pupils are the 'depositories' and the teacher is the 'depositor'. 'Instead of communicating, the

teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize and repeat' (p. 72). Pupils are seen to mirror an oppressive society where creativity is suppressed. Freire (2010) believes the oppressed are not 'marginals', and on the outside of society, and that they have always been on the inside but have been made 'beings for others' (p. 75). Freire suggests that these 'marginals' should not be integrated into the oppressive structure, but that the structure (and probably the epistemology of the oppressors) should be transformed to undermine the oppressors to become 'beings for themselves' (2010, p. 74.) The banking analogy, according to Freire, contains contradictions to reality and:

'Sooner or later, these contradictions may lead formerly passive students to turn against their domestication and their attempt to domesticate reality...sooner or later they may perceive the contradiction in which banking education seeks to maintain them, and then engage themselves in the struggle for their liberation' (2010, p. 75).

The alternative suggested by Freire is the position of 'humanist' showing a trust in people and a belief in creative power and, to reach this aim, 'they must be partners of the students in their relations with them' (2010, p. 75). The banking analogy would see this approach as undermining the power of oppression and working towards liberation. The person is 'in the world' as opposed to 'with the world or others'.

Therefore, co-existing with students is not good enough and Freire concludes that:

'Only through communication can human life hold meaning...authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about reality, does not place in ivory tower isolation, but only communication. If it is true that thought has meaning only when generated by action upon the world, the subordination of students to teachers becomes impossible' (2010, p. 77).

Moreover, Tobbell, (2000) in her summing up of Freire's work, begins to highlight (though not directly) why we have this problem of acts of resistance. Tobbell (2000) sums up Freire's work as arguing for:

'A liberation of the education system' (p. 204) through encouraging 'responsibility and autonomy in both parties and results in an appreciation of the dialectical nature of knowledge and thought' (2000, p. 204).

Through the lens of Freire, education is seen to be about ideas (not knowledge as such) and Tobbell suggests:

'It is about engaging in dialogue to generate thought, explanations and understanding. He rejects the

status of the 'expert' and instead argues for an exchange of ideas which both parties benefit and develop. Children are effectively being taught to learn about learning and not being used as vessels for knowledge transmission. Education is expressed as 'a mutuality' (p. 204).

This vision presents issues for the whole education system which is based around a positivist ideology, where the national curriculum is set (or prescribed) and teachers must deliver the content by teaching. Tobbell recognises the curriculum to be oppressive, as it:

'Imposes a particular world view on our children and their teachers...The curriculum content is decided by the powerful and enables them to control what is learned in school and so inevitably what society internalises as that which is valuable to learn' (2000, p. 204).

Tobbell (2000) also recognises that the national curriculum constrains pupils and 'deskills' teachers. Tobbell also provides evidence from Freire that acknowledges 'prescription' as a quality of the relationship between oppressor and the oppressed.

The learner and the notion of 'readiness to learn' (which is apparent in the mutuality of Vygotsky's ZPD) becomes important and the 'subjectivity' of both pupil and teacher takes priority, where:

'Learning is about an interaction between both parties and is influenced by the knowledge, ideas and assumptions both parties bring to the situation' (Tobbell, 2000, p. 205).

Both the pupil and teacher must be 'prepared' for learning to occur. If the teacher is fantastic but the pupil is not ready to learn, or the pupil is clever but the teacher is, for whatever reason, not ready to teach, true learning will not occur. Tobbell (2000) sums up education through Freire's work as:

'About enabling children and teachers to enter into a dialogue about the curriculum, about ensuring that they are part of the knowledge and not subject to it' (2000, p.205).

The National Curriculum as prescribed, then, would become just one representation on offer, but the whole education system would need reconceptualising, and ideologies challenged, for this to happen.

Two practical examples of projects that have tried to use the socio-cultural theory and reconceptualise how education should be viewed

are the SPRiNG project (Social Pedagogic Research into Group Work) and the OC project (Open Class-room).

The SPRiNG project was carried out in Britain (over four years) in response to criticisms that much class-room research was often irrelevant to practitioners. Blatchford (2003) acting as one of the groups directors stated that:

'It sought to set this discourse within an alternative theoretical framework where learning and development were situated within ecologically meaningful environmental contexts. It was argued that within the 'microsystems' of a school, there will be social pedagogical sub-systems at the classroom level that have qualitatively distinct sets of relationships, rules and dynamics which can promote or hinder learning and social development' (Blatchford et al., 2003, p.3).

The social pedagogical sub-system involved 'fixed factors' and included; seating arrangements, class composition and stability of groups, which form part of my research. The main goal of the SPRiNG project was to implement strategies in schools that addressed the limited use of group work and at the same time highlighted its potential when used effectively. At the time of this research, Blatchford et al. (2003) believed that the way some pupils

were taught or grouped in class-rooms may actually have inhibited learning rather than have promoted it. Later research, also by Blatchford et al. (2006), found that pressures arising from curriculum demands and the classroom context (i.e. large numbers of pupils) often forced teachers to use teacher-led or whole class activities (at the expense of group work).

The SPRiNG project, being built around a social pedagogical approach, focused on four main areas: the class-room context (preparing the class-room and groups), interactions between children (preparing and developing pupil skills), teacher's role (preparing adults for working with groups) and tasks (preparing lessons and group work activities). The group work was analysed with these four building blocks in mind as well as their interrelationships.

However, in terms of group composition, the issue of pupil choice was deemed as problematic. They believed that allowing children to select whom they worked with could reinforce social divisions, (e.g., on the basis of gender and ability) and also isolate children who were not chosen and, as such, the children were made aware of the advantages of working with members of the class other than their closest friends. This, however, conflicts with the data that emerged from my thematic analysis when exploring the pupils' voice, as the majority of pupils firmly believed that they learned more when sitting with their friends and that they became distracted when apart. This

aspect of friendship was supported by the need for social interaction within the class-room and the resulting acts of resistance that were displayed when this social interaction was denied. Also, although the project researchers believed there to be a problem with pupils selecting friends, it was later suggested that:

‘Every teacher knows that some pupils have conflicting personalities and may not work well together. Some children may disrupt class-room activities and solitary or very quiet children may hinder the group’ (2003, p. 167).

However, my research revealed that activities within friendships were opaque to many teachers, so it would be the pupils who knew which groups or individuals got on and which conflicted, not the teachers. Also, as the very nature of friendships shift, these dynamics may also change regularly with and between some groups, which could prove problematic for the teacher. At least self-selection of seating or collaborative groups would allow for up-to-date dynamics.

So there does seem to be discontinuities between teachers’ and pupils’ views on the issue of who works effectively with whom, and as the projects aim (which I totally endorse) was to shift responsibility for learning onto the pupil, it would make sense to allow self-organisation, especially in relation to friendship groups and seating arrangements.

The project also refers to making activities fun (which relates to avoiding boredom) and suggests that the teacher must be skilled enough to structure the lesson to facilitate group work, and get quality into the interactions. Due to time constraints, many teachers did not think there was time for group work, but as Blatchford et al suggested:

‘It must be seen as part of the whole curriculum, integrated, not separate...part of the fabric of classroom life, not extra to it’ (2003, p. 169).

The statement above is in full support of my Research aim 3 in relation to the importance of socio-cultural theory, along with:

‘The classroom of the future, and the pedagogy relevant to it may be more about co-learner – that is, pupils learning from and with each other, and making sense of the information available to us all’ (2003, p. 169).

Here, the distinction between hierarchies in teacher-pupil and novice-expert become vague, which surely allows a more equal distribution of power within education and optimism for future pedagogy. Again, this is commensurate with the socio-cultural framework and in line with my ontological and epistemological thinking.

The second practical example of a project focusing on the socio-cultural approach is that of the 'Open-Class-room' (OC) project, pioneered by Rogoff et al. (2002) and follows a similar socio-cultural background in ideology as the SPRiNG project with their focus on the 'school community' and the notion of learning together. They also try to offer a practical and workable solution to the present education system. Similarly, their research also mirrors some of the points made by Freire, (2010) and shows how effective learning as a community and together can be. Although her research is conducted in a school in Salt Lake City, Utah, America, her principles reflect how best pupils learn: she shows that pupils and adults learn by participating within a community of learners by engaging together in activities of mutual interest. Rogoff (2002) does acknowledge that 'flexibility' is key to success of such an approach and that:

'The flexibility required in creating curriculum with children yields a different class-room structure than in schools in which the structure and curriculum are determined by the teacher and texts and packaged curriculum, without the children's involvement in what and how they are learning' (2002, p. 101).

Children were observed as being 'immersed in learning', eager 'collaboration' and a willingness to learn from each other. Pupils were involved at all levels; planning, brainstorming, decision-making,

questioning, discussing, voting, analysing, organising, problem solving. They learned to collaborate, both within their own small committee, and then across committees/groups. Rogoff et al. (2002) believed that collaboration (both within the class-room and outside of it) requires 'openness and flexibility' to enable mutual learning and to accept that the answer 'I don't know' is a legitimate one. Children learned as they took part, and gained skills and information that had meaning and value for them. The learning (sometimes alone as well as in groups) became part of the pupil.

The OC also brought into discussion the notion of the function of a ten minute break-time (or recess). This issue arose because the children (unlike traditional class-rooms, where break-times are seen as space to exercise and talk with their friends) were in a very social environment the whole time at school. The OC found that break-time often interrupted the flow of the social interactions and learning in the class-rooms. The main element of success with a variety of aspects of schooling seemed to be the process where ownership was jointly constructed. Whatever the outcome, it was agreed and decided upon jointly as a community.

'With this understanding and self-confidence, they can enhance and embellish assignments, discuss requirements and expectations, seek new depths and experiences, and search for meaning and value in projects and classroom studies' (2002, p. 102).

An example of how effective this approach can be was cited by Rogoff et al. (2002) where her ex-project member moved schools (eighth-grade) and said to her mum that it was her fault if school was 'boring'. She acknowledged that, just because boring homework or work had been given by a teacher, this did not mean that she had to be constrained by that title etc. and could begin to 'own' it by visiting the library, adding extra depth to what was originally boring. The girl also asked for help to edit her work from her mum. This reveals that 'attitude' of the learner is so important in terms of motivation and suggests that:

'With the aim of really understanding what is learned, and being prepared for lifelong learning, there is no substitute for being involved in creating an emerging curriculum' (2002, p. 102).

This (and parts of the previous research on the SPRiNG project) has implications for both teachers and schools generally, as they need to be aware ontologically of the social-cultural approach (that the OC project adopted) which can help to explain children's behaviour. If the relational notion was brought to the forefront of any educational policies or the National Curriculum, then this would mean revisiting what school really is (instead of an exam passing factory): children need not only to participate (which many seem to actually resist), but

they also need to engage actively in their own learning on a more equal footing.

General Comments

All of the above sections reinforce the importance of applying the socio-cultural theory to education to help to understand friendships, and why friendships have remained opaque to so many teachers for such a long time. Before the analysis is complete, however, the influence of technology must be considered, as much of the limited friendship literature was carried out prior to the advance of technology. Moreover, due to technological advances, the internet and mobile phones have increased the frequency of interactions at home, where in the past when pupils left school they would not see or even speak to their friends until the next morning.

Teachers are aware of some issues relating to cyber-space, but again much of what happens within friendships using technology also remains secret to many teachers, and again is another under-researched area.

Technology

The data below seem to reveal some negative aspects of technology (as expressed by Teacher 2 and Teacher 8) within schools in relation to learning and concentration on tasks. Also, many friends seem to

have become almost dependent on using technology as a tool to help to provide social interaction when they can not be face-to-face.

583 - 587

(T2) I think they're really detrimental to them.....I really, absolutely...I really, due to personal experience can't see a positive...even now they pay less attention to their work because they multi-task while they're on the computer... they have face-book....

2238 – 2240

(T8) I know there's been issues about pupils who should have been in my lessons who have been accused or being bullied, cyber-bullying.

Similarly, this negative influence of technology could be seen clearly in the example below, where one pupil used deceit to stay in touch with her friends. She had been punished by her mother for getting into trouble at school (also in relation to a Facebook incident). Her punishment was for her to lose access at home to Facebook.

10007 – 10009

Both 24E and her friend stated that 24E (when I asked how she'd cope without it) replied that she had it on her phone, but 24E said that her mum didn't know this.

The problem with some of the technological interactions at home was that sometimes pupils could fall-out and these issues could be brought back into school the next day, again often remaining secret to the teacher, until the problem became public.

1658 – 1670

® Some pupils can leave school happy and then through MSN, Facebook etc. during the evening, can fall out and can't wait to arrive at school to sort out what someone's said about them...?

(T5) Because there's no emotion there.

® That's right.

(T5) And that's the biggest problem, shall we say of 'social networking' ...all this technology...there is absolutely no emotional involvement there and it changes the complexion of everything that is in reality. You don't know the flavour of it at all.

2829 – 2834

(1A) I text 4A saying something I didn't mean to be bad, but.....

® They might interpret differently?

(1A) Yeah – and she thought I meant it badly and she was in a really bad mood with me the next day.

5514 – 5516

(27E) We fall out on MSN.

(25E) On MSN we fall out.

The following sequences reveal how messaging sites and text messages can have a negative affect, not only on the identity of the actual person involved, but also on the audience who read any messages on their computers or mobile phones.

9782 – 9794

Over the week there has been a group set up on the website on Facebook where some pupils have joined. The site was ‘I hate’ a certain teacher in this school. It seemed to have over 40 members in this school (so my informants told me), but many realised that school knew so deleted their name off the web-site before the head teacher could trace them. Those without internet or phones seemed unable to delete their names. There were six remaining names on the site, all of which were being dealt with, and as part of their punishment they had to come in with school uniform, even though it was a non-school uniform day; two of those involved were in this form, one was in my

observation group. (They both arrived later than normal, but during registration).

One consequence of this cyber-space related to research by Smith et al. (2008), where the home no longer can be seen as separate from school, because sometimes negative messages sent out of school-time will ultimately be sorted out the next day during school time (usually the space before school starts or break-times), which will impact on learning and a pupil's and even teacher's concentration. In terms of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1979), this cyber-space will form part of the exosystem and part of the wider interpersonal systems that operate within and across contexts. This setting can impact negatively on identity, as the person may be targeted and not know it, for example, like the message written on Facebook to join the 'I hate Teacher 1 group.'

The traditional view of focusing on the individual and the research on the importance and function of friendships now has very little practical relevance to today's society, as research should be focused more on the shifting nature of friendships in response to technological advance. With a socio-cultural influence, friendships are embedded in culture and society and shift accordingly, and teachers need to be aware of this.

Chapter summary

The Narrative provided an holistic description of the importance of friendships throughout the school day. As such, it supported Research aim 1 (To explore continuities and discontinuities in understandings between Key Stage 3 teachers and pupils in relation to the importance and functions of peer groups during break-times and within the class-room), and Research aim 2 (To explore pupils' negotiations of social relationships in the school environment) and provided a basis for the thematic analysis to build upon, which involved much more depth and the application of Research aim 3 (To explore the usefulness and application of socio-cultural theory in understanding Key Stage 3 friendships and pedagogy).

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The thematic analysis led to the emergence of the over-riding theme of 'the secret world of friendships'. As such, it considered all three of the research aims, and in particular, by usefully applying the socio-cultural approach (Research aim 3) tried to offer an explanation or a new way of understanding the issues embedded within the present educational structure of the school and overall education system.

The thematic analysis revealed that pupils saw schools serving different functions for them, and this meant that they were caught up in two very separate and different worlds; the educational world and the social world. The problem being that these two worlds were often seen to compete, and the social world was often more powerful. The two worlds functioned using different agendas and, when conflict occurred, there were no strategies in place for teachers to deal with

this. Teachers' choices included: trying to deal with it, sending out and passing the problem on, or ignoring the situation.

As we are relational beings and learning happens through relationships (ZPD), there exists a problem of how we can effectively share a Community of Practice. As a class, pupils share the same psychological space and inhabit the same physical space and this is assumed to be enough for learning to be effective for all the pupils. The design of the school including; the curriculum, hierarchies, classroom seating, the structure of the school day, bells, homework etc. all impose on the identity of the individual (both pupil and teacher alike). However, without the acceptance or awareness of the importance and existence of the 'social world', pupils will continue to inhabit different worlds than that assumed by educationalists.

The secret world of friendships needs to be uncovered, so teachers can become aware of just how powerful groups can be around the school (both at break-times and within the lesson): presently, much of a groups' activity still remains 'secret' and hence inaccessible to most teachers, and the education system (as it is presently designed), does not consider the importance of social worlds in relation to learning for education. The design and structure of education (including teacher training) is based on traditional theories that clearly distributes power and control in favour of the teacher. Without an understanding of the socio-cultural theory, teachers and policy makers will be misinformed as to the impact of friendships on

learning, and the power and interconnectedness of these friendships within and between contexts.

Therefore, in relation to the title, the data (from both the narrative and the thematic analysis) have shown how break-time activities within and between peer groups can affect learning within the class-room, but the problem that emerged was that many teachers were unaware of, or ignored this secret world, and as such, the direct implications for learning. What emerges here is the issue that, if pupils' friendships and the connected implications for learning remain opaque or are ignored by teachers, then the title of this thesis becomes problematic in terms of answering the original question, (An Exploration of Key Stage 3 Girls' Peer Group Friendships Outside the Class-room and their Influence Within the Class-room), straightforwardly.

On the one-hand, the pupils' voice reveals that many arguments can, and do, over-spill into the lesson from break-time, which suggests that these activities may affect their concentration and hence learning in that lesson. Similarly, the other important issue that emerged for friendship groups was that of being separated from their friends in lessons. Both these elements of a pupil's life impact on their cognitive capacity. In the first instance, the arguments brought in from break-time needed to be resolved, so learning space (cognitive capacity) was taken up to do this. In the second situation, pupils often entered into acts of resistance to provide the interaction and

attention from peer group members that some teachers had prevented happening by not allowing pupils a choice of seating.

The issue brought to the forefront of my research is how pupils try to manage these different selves, or how they have problems negotiating these. Educationalists may benefit from being made aware of how useful it may be to understand how the socio-cultural theory can be applied to help understand pupils' identity issues, and how pupils' behaviour within the class-room (and break-times) is not just in response to instruction, but can be influenced by the active interactions of groups/friendships. Pupils acknowledge the fact that break-times are different from formal learning in the class-room, but some teachers still seem to miss the subtleties that peer groups influence can have on the learning process, (although many of these instances to be fair are not consistent and often are unpredictable). Learning can not just be a transmission of knowledge in a time zone (which in schools' case is the class-room).

Similarly, traditional learning theories and their rational approaches tend to not focus on the importance of emotion in learning. The implication of these traditional views again leads to an image of a pupil sitting in a class-room where knowledge is given out by the teacher and the pupil is expected to internalise all this information within the lesson time slot before leaving. It seems to be a mistake to accept that all learning can be left to the curriculum and can be absorbed as it was given out without any obstacles to learning

existing (like friendship issues and the influence of cognitive capacity). Issues like this highlight the importance of using socio-cultural theory as a way of helping teachers to understand these complexities within their class-room environment, which was what the SPRiNG Project (Blatchford, 2003, 2006) and OC project (Rogoff, 2002) both attempted to do.

In the SPRiNG project, emphasis was put on developing interaction skills between pupils, which involved a lot of hard work and preparation from the teacher, with had the aim of enhancing social relationships between pupils within the class-room and shifting the responsibility of learning from the teacher onto the pupil. This possible action may have helped reduce any 'obstacles' discussed above. Within the OC project pupils also learned by participating within a community of learners, but the mutual involvement of pupils at all levels of the decision-making process meant that the environment remained a very sociable one all of the time. This aspect of the project was highlighted when break-times were considered as an interruption of learning and taken out of the school day. The OC project stressed flexibility and showed how important socio-cultural theory was in the quest to understand many of the complexities of learning.

In summation, therefore, by listening to the pupils' voice, it would be fair to suggest that pupils' behaviour in relation to peer group activities during break-time, and also within the lesson, (in terms of

being denied chances of interaction) does affect the general pedagogy within the class-room. The quality of the relationship between pupil and teacher (which needs to remain good for the successful emergence of a zone of proximal development) must be put under jeopardy, as the pupil has to use some of their cognitive capacity to sort out arguments or maintain social interaction secretly (when split up).

If, therefore, teachers do not understand this secret world (and this now includes advances in technologies) and believe that it should not have anything to do with learning, then their pedagogical planning would not be affected as they would not have included friendship groups in their planning. However, as the pupils' voice suggests, pedagogy would be affected in relation to cognitive capacity and the quality of the relationship to enable the emergence of a zone of proximal development.

CHAPTER FIVE

THESIS REVIEW

The Research aims are:

- 1) To explore continuities and discontinuities in understandings between Key Stage 3 teachers and pupils in relation to the importance and functions of peer groups during break-times and within the class-room.**
- 2) To explore pupils' negotiations of social relationships in the school environment.**
- 3) To explore the usefulness and application of socio-cultural theory in understanding Key Stage 3 friendships and pedagogy.**

Implications of the research

These aims have allowed me to pursue an area that, up to now, has received little attention. I have been able to identify the gaps that exist within this friendship and learning literature, (as this area has previously been both under-theorised and under-researched) in relation to my aims. I acknowledge that the large amount of data I

have collected and transcribed along my journey has had to be represented in the thesis in just a few thousand words and barely does justice to the depth and complexity of this under-researched area. I did, however, try to provide a narrative (which tried to situate friendship groups within the pupils' and teacher's whole experience of school) to take into account the need for a more holistic picture of the research. This helped to highlight Research aim 1 (to explore continuities and discontinuities in understandings between Key Stage 3 teachers and pupils in relation to the importance and functions of peer groups during break-times and within the class-room) and Research aim 2 (to explore pupils' negotiations of social relationships in the school environment) and provided a basis for exploring Research aim 3 (to explore the usefulness and application of socio-cultural theory in understanding Key Stage 3 friendships and pedagogy) to understand friendships and learning in the thematic analysis. The thematic analysis specifically focused on the three Research aims in more detail, and allowed one overriding theme of 'the secret world of friendships' to emerge.

All along my research journey I have been faced with choices (including ontological, epistemological and methodological), that will have affected the type of data that was collected, and may have, therefore, overlooked other available choices in my focus on the interpretive framework. I hope that these choices I have made have helped provide data that is both rich and as honest as possible. I am aware that there are multiple realities out there in the world, and the

one I have presented is just another one of those. I have also tried to be as reflexive as possible, and I have been open about my theoretical position which reflects my beliefs about friendships and learning in relation to the socio-cultural approach. The research findings are offered as a contribution to a different way of viewing friendships and learning.

Some of the implications and ramifications of this research for both teachers and pupils, are outlined below:

- Teachers have a difficult decision to make. Do they use collaboration that they employ through strategic planning, or do they allow self-differentiation between groups? In some classes this may lead to further self-differentiation, and a difficult teaching and learning environment as shown by observational and interview evidence.
- There seems to be a lack of meaningful insight into the educational system to assist learning and teaching, or to link theory and practice as ontologically human behaviours emerge in the interaction with the self and the environment, and the activities within that context.
- All teachers acknowledged the importance of friends for pupils, when interviewed, but in practice, friendship seems to

threaten some teachers' teaching strategies leading to possible discontinuities between belief and action.

- There is a dilemma for teachers when the experience of being split up is not constructed as positive by the pupils: do teachers accept the existence of the importance of friendship groups or do they ignore how the action and workings of friendship groups within their class-room can construct learning in a certain way? (Solution? – self-organisation. However, this 'choice' is contrary to the accepted reinforced practice).
- Identity and experience does not have an 'on-off' switch. The self is distributed and the 'outside' influences the 'inside' (the here and now, which ultimately must influence the future). As strategies for dealing with this issue seem not to exist at present, the solution is to deny this aspect.
- Although all teachers in interview acknowledged the importance of friends within school, in practice this friendship for some teachers was seen as a barrier to learning and seemed to threaten their identity within the class-room. There are many layers of friendship beyond what can be seen directly, and many teachers are unaware of these, which lead to many discontinuities in understandings of the importance and function of friendship groups within life.

- Group territory and the notion of protection of these social spaces seem to still remain secret to the majority of teachers. Groups talk of areas of ownership around the school. Within the interviews and across years these areas were known and respected as belonging to their rightful owners. There is a claim to land, and the group own it and use it as a base on good weather days. They go to extreme lengths to keep this and protect it from teachers and other groups. The groups rush out to get to their areas before others try to take it over. However, there is a pecking order and general respect for these spaces, as most of the pupils can identify each groups' earned space. Most groups have respect for each other's space, but some groups are rivals and some try to take over this important space.
- All teachers interviewed seemed to fully understand the importance of friends in school and one teacher even related the importance to herself. This empathy, for some, seemed to be lost in the practice of teaching, and reflected the present structure of schools and the constraints put on both teachers and pupils. The education system (including the prescribed national curriculum) seems to still be built around traditional views of teaching and learning, and does not focus on the interconnectedness of the individual's life and ignores the impact of friendships on learning.

- The pupils seem to exacerbate the situation by making break-times theirs and completely protecting their friendship groups by making access into their world difficult for teachers to gain. Without this important link and knowledge with some understandings attached, how can teachers possibly engage pupils fully? Some teachers expect or demand pupils to leave their break-time 'self' at the class-room door and 'switch off' instantly, which must be difficult to do. There is an apparent lack of understanding of the socio-cultural approach and the difficulties faced by pupils when they are expected to just 'switch off'.
- Teachers' knowledge of pupils' activities at break-time varied, but many had no idea what happened at break-time and considered that separate from the whole school day. Many realised the importance of break-times with friends, but did not seem to understand that a lot more than play goes on at break-time and, more importantly, that these 'activities' may have direct implications for the following lesson. Issues involve aspects of: power elements in relation to claims to land (winning or losing), power struggles generally between and within groups, and unfinished business in need of resolving. The reason why this area is clouded may be to do with the lack of literature available at secondary level which, again, would mean that this element of their teacher training would

have been omitted unintentionally, as this was nothing to do with teaching – their earned free time. There is another unknown world out there that has different codes, rules, power imbalances etc., that does often impact on, and continue into lessons, which must ultimately affect both teaching and learning. The majority of teachers did not see break-time as any of their business, and only became interested in what went on if a pupil came telling tales or was in need of help (knocking on the KS3 co-ordinator's door or the staffroom). A more detailed exploration of the hidden curriculum in relation to friendships and learning is needed to enhance educational knowledge.

- All the above points strengthen the need to understand the importance and function of peer groups outside of the lesson space, as well as within the lessons. The socio-cultural approach can do this and it can become a tool to help teachers maximise pupils' learning potential, and provide a more meaningful and holistic view of education, whilst at the same time adding continuity to the curriculum and bridging the gap between teachers' philosophies and student identities. In fact, there is already a question being asked here, as to the extent socio-cultural theory is a 'tool' or an actual way of understanding learning which demands certain ontological beliefs.

Reflecting back along my journey

At the beginning of my research, I was hoping that I would be able (through emerging data) to explore Key Stage 3 girls' peer group friendships outside the class-room and their influence within the class-room. There was no direct information available on this topic and I was interested in trying to develop this under-researched area to provide educational understanding, or even awareness of this area for professionals involved in the education system, like myself. I was hoping that two of my Research aims would provide knowledge on this particular focus (which they both did), as they allowed me to both explore continuities and discontinuities in understandings between Key Stage 3 teachers and pupils in relation to the importance and functions of peer groups' during break-times and within the class-room, and to explore pupils' negotiations of social relationships in the school environment. I found that much of the activity of peer groups remained a secret world to many teachers, (both during break-time and sometimes intriguingly also within the class-room).

Many teachers were unaware of how and where pupils spent their break-time, and what emerged was a secret world of friendships. Moreover, congruent to, and embedded within this secret world was the notion of power of friendships across both contexts of break-time and class-room. This power revealed itself in the data (both through interviewing and observations) in the form of acts of resistance displayed by the pupils and, again, remaining secret to many

teachers. These acts of resistance were often in the form of note-passing, non-verbal communication and the use of symbols or clothing to attract other peer's attention. These acts of resistance were used to fill 'boring' spaces within some lessons, or were a direct result of being split up from their peer groups within lessons.

Now, nearing the journey's end and having reviewed the rich qualitative data that has emerged, both from the pupils' voice and the teachers' voice, it has become evident that, at present, particularly with the way the school and education system is structured, my initial focus has begun to open up a number of problems for both pupils and teachers alike: This is where my third Research aim (to explore the usefulness and application of socio-cultural theory in understanding Key Stage 3 friendships and pedagogy) has been used to try to explain many of the problems encountered in the unfolding research, and provide possible alternative solutions for some of the issues.

Contribution to the literature

Due to the lack of research in this area (both in terms of gaps in the literature and under-theorising), I would like to think that my Research aims and the findings from data and analysis, do contribute to the literature (if only in a small but different way) by helping to offer a re-conceptualisation of the notion of friendships and their affect on learning and, more generally, on pedagogy. I hope that I have offered

a new way of looking at and understanding this important and overlooked element of education.

My research has challenged many of the existing ontological and epistemological assumptions of what learning is, and highlighted the importance of the social, especially how the use of the socio-cultural approach, when applied to education, can provide teachers with an alternative understanding of the complexity of learning. The notion of the interconnectedness of contexts and the personal/social all emerge from the pupils' voice embedded in the data. In this thesis, I have tried to promote discussion of my title, as so far, it remains an under-researched (but important) area within education.

Further Research

- Develop my original thesis by researching in other schools to highlight how important the socio-cultural approach should be for making sense of friendship and learning. I would hope that, by carrying out more research, this would allow the socio-cultural approach to develop a voice that is listened to by educational professionals, if only to start a debate about its ability to offer an alternative to the present education system's ontological and epistemological philosophical roots. I would argue that it offers an optimistic outlook where power struggles, in terms of subversion and acts of resistance, are

less likely to emerge, and learning and the social can become friends and not enemies.

- The hidden curriculum has emerged as being an important part of friendships (and has affected learning and behaviour within the class-room). Again, very little research has been done on how pupils and even teachers manage this informal alongside the formal, or its impact on a student's identity. Much of this hidden curriculum seems to remain secret to teachers.
- The notion of cognitive capacity and the influence that problematic friendships have on cognitive capacity, (in relation to emotions), could also be explored further, along with its impact on learning. There may be issues such as fall-outs within and between groups, both during break-time and within the lesson, (as has emerged in this thesis) that the teacher is unaware of or ignores. The notion that some pupils have the 'social skills' to deal with these friendship issues, whilst others do not, also opens up another interesting area to explore, and again relates to the present structure of schools in terms of the notion that, in the class-room, learning and the social should not really meet. In terms of the socio-cultural approach, some pupils seem to have the cognitive capacity and/or social skills to successfully negotiate their identities, both outside and

within the class-room, without any obvious negative impact on learning. Other pupils seem to lack this ability and sometimes their social impedes on their learning.

- In relation to pedagogy, the seating and the lay-out of the class-room can impact on learning in terms of being split up from, or collaborating with, peer groups. The notion of allowing choice and self-differentiation is also another interesting area that emerged. Pupils often liked to work with their friends and many said that they learned more. However, a minority said that their friends distracted them. When pupils were split up, it was noticeable just how many acts of resistance emerged. Pellegrini and Blatchford (2003), also suggest a link between a pupil's seat choice and their overall feelings about school in general, but acknowledge the difficulties in explaining this link through lack of research available. They do suggest, however, that 'pupil attitudes are predicted by seating' (2003, p. 94), but concentrate more, as an example, on nearness to the teacher as being one of the main factors producing effective learning and participation (as well as smaller class sizes).
- The notion and use of 'power' within friendships has also been acknowledged within this research, but no time has been allocated to look into the mechanisms of this and this is also worthy of further research. This aspect includes the extent to which participation is presented as a choice and how much it

is affected by structure and power issues that may close off participation. The notion of pupils being able to freely choose groups on the basis of friendships may sit alongside what has been found here in terms of social division and exclusion in peer groups.

- The notion of considering movement from break-time to lessons as 'transition' may be worth exploring. There has been much written on transition from home to starting a new school, or from primary school to secondary school, but little attention has been paid to looking at break-time into lessons as a transition phase.
- Also, the research to date does not discuss the impact on friendship of developing technologies, and how this impact plays out during break-times or at home. The socio-cultural approach highlights the notion of interconnectedness, and could help to explore how friendship issues outside school (home) may be brought into school, and indirectly affect learning. The notion of cyber-bullying within and between friendship groups is also another related area here.

All of the above are merely suggestions for future research and are not realities.

Concluding comments

Having carried out this research (albeit on a small-scale), what has emerged is the sheer importance of friendships for pupils, and how these friendships can, and do, impact on learning in the class-room. These external influences outside the class-room can affect behaviour and learning within the class-room. Moreover, these friendships still remain a secret to many teachers, and the power of friendship can often be played out through displays of acts of resistance.

Wenger (1991) suggests that:

‘focusing on an institutionalized curriculum without addressing issues of identity thus runs the risk of serving only those who already have an identity of participation with respect to the material in other contexts’ (p.269).

The research reflects my findings, that highlights the notion that many pupils are more or less forced to choose between a meaningful identity and learning, which leads to a conflict between their personal and social lives and their ‘intellectual engagement in school.’

If the school is focused on instruction, (with reified subject matter), due to the imposition of the national curriculum and exam grades, then:

‘this attitude will appear as failure to learn...Our communities of practice then become resources for organising our learning as well as contexts in which to manifest our learning through an identity of participation. What is crucial about this kind of engagement as an educational experience is that identity and learning serve each other’ (1998, p. 271).

Moreover, both traditional ontological and epistemological assumptions would have to be challenged and overturned if the socio-cultural approach was to have any chance of becoming widely embedded within the education system, and taken seriously by professionals. Unfortunately, as Gatto concluded:

‘It is the great triumph of compulsory government monopoly mass schooling that among even the best of my fellow teachers and among the best of my students’ parents, only a small number can imagine a different way to do things’ (2005, p.11).

It seems that, still, for many people there is a vision that good education equates to a good job, good money and, if left like this, (as is at the moment) means that:

'This prescription makes both parent and student easier to regulate and intimidate as long as the connection goes unchallenged either for its veracity or in its philosophical truth' (Gatto, 2005, p. 60).

The concepts of what counts as 'truth' and 'knowledge' would need re-defining. The more research available and the more socio-cultural projects that can be successfully implemented within schools, the closer we may come to lifting the oppression and curtailing acts of resistance within school environments, which have arisen as a direct consequence of the present structure of schools.

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